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Getting into tea culture helped Tan Bo discover the more feminine side of her character. **Page 9**



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There's No Place Like Home



Gao Gao leaves his home in Wolong Nature Reserve, for a 10-year residency at San Diego Zoo in the US.

Xinhua Photo

By Xiao Rong

Sichuan, the provincial home of China's giant panda, may soon consider putting restrictions on overseas and even inter-province travel of what is arguably the world's most recognizable animal.

"People who want to see giant pandas should come to Sichuan, and save our national treasure the trouble and misery of being transported to other provinces, or even abroad," says Tan Zuoren, vice secretary-general of the Sichuan-based Green River environmental protection organization.

Tan is calling for the strict control of donations, loans and exchanges of giant pandas, and in December, put forward his legislative suggestions to the Legal Affairs Committee of the Sichuan People's Congress.

The suggestions have found some support in the congress, which has listed them on the provincial five-year legislative program.

Pandas are not commodities

"Like other animals, giant pandas should enjoy the right of survival and habitation, but frequent moves from their homes in Sichuan to other places can only harm their basic rights," says Tan.

The giant panda is listed as one of the most endangered wild animal species in the world. Conservationists estimate there are only some 1,000 living in the wild, mainly in the mountains of Sichuan.

China has put great effort into the conservation of giant pandas, establishing extensive nature reserves to protect their habitats from destruction or fragmentation due to human activities. Captive breeding programs using artificial insemination have also been used as a key method of preventing further decrease in the wild population of giant pandas, with 52 artificially bred giant pandas having survived over the past four years.

But sending giant pandas to zoos in

other provinces and in other countries for exhibition or research continues.

Tan cites statistics from Fengtong village in Baoxing county, showing that over 115 giant pandas have been leased or sent away as gifts since the 1970s when a panda breeding center was established there. There are now only 72 giant pandas left in the county.

"These giant pandas sent outside to zoos are actually suffering in air-conditioned and caged environments. Who knows exactly the extent of their loneliness and misery?" In Tan's view, there is no justification for causing the pandas such suffering.

"The local government should restrict the number of giant pandas sent out of Sichuan. For special circumstances, such as scientific research or governmental visits, the time limit on panda loans should be no more than two years," he adds.

The basic principle of "in situ" conservation should be stressed in protecting giant pandas, Tan emphasizes. "Otherwise, Sichuan's boast of being 'the kingdom of the giant panda' will one day become an empty one."

Study needed

Vice director of the Legal Affairs Committee of the Sichuan local congress Chen Shuangquan says, "The congress has paid high attention to the advice of Tan Zuoren, listing it as one of the

next five-year legislative programs in Sichuan."

Chen told *Beijing Today* that a thorough survey of the number of giant pandas donated or leased in recent years will have to first be conducted by the local government, after which specific legislative adjustments regarding panda conservation can then be made.

Based on statistics provided by Tan, giant pandas given or loaned from the nature reserve in Fengtong village outnumber those artificially bred in the region, Chen said, "But these seem to be statistics from several years ago, so a new survey needs to be conducted."

If as Tan claims, the giant panda population really has suffered a decline due to donations and loans, said Chen, the local government will consider local legislation on panda conservation.

Beijing Today contacted the Giant Panda protection office of the Sichuan Forestry Bureau for comment on Tan's proposal to restrict panda loans.

Zhang Liming, an official from the office responded that there have always been strict controls on panda loans. Zoos in other provinces wanting to loan pandas from Sichuan must first submit a report to the office.

"We choose those that meet with our standards and submit a report to the State Forestry Bureau for their final approval," he said.

As to international donations or loans, Zhang said the conditions are stricter and require joint approval by the State Forestry Bureau, Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

When asked how many giant pandas were donated or loaned annually, Zhang said it was impossible to give an exact number.

Panda loans under control

"We usually loan cubs or old pandas, rather than those with the ability to procreate. Charging a higher price can also deter some loan requests," said Wei Zongping, director of the Giant Panda Breeding Center at Wolong Nature Reserve, one of the biggest among Sichuan's 32 nature reserves.

A 27-year-old panda named Shi Shi has just completed his 10-year tour of duty at San Diego Zoo in the US, returning last Sunday to his home at Wolong. His replacement, 11-year-old Gao Gao embarked on his journey to San Diego Tuesday.

Pandas like Shi Shi and Gao Gao with an international mission, usually attract an annual fee of about one million dollars, said Wei. For domestic loans, the annual charge amounts to 100,000 to 150,000 yuan.

"We are cautious when we examine the breeding conditions of zoos that want to loan our pandas. Only those

with ample space, sufficient supplies of food, advanced veterinary services and abundant funding can qualify for the loan," he added.

There are now 63 artificially bred giant pandas in Wei's breeding center, 16 of which are now on loan.

"Captivity breeding is not the final goal of our research to increase the overall population of giant pandas. These pandas need to be trained to adapt to their natural habitats to help increase the species diversity," Wei said.

The WWF (formerly World Wildlife Fund), which has long been dedicated to panda conservation work in China, has expressed reserved objection to the concept of international "panda loans" for payment.

"WWF opposes panda loans unless it can be clearly demonstrated that they help to improve the prospects of survival for the giant panda in the wild through the provision of funds for *in situ* conservation projects and involves captive born animals only," according to a published statement on the issue.

Tan Zuoren emphasizes that his suggestion should not be taken as opposition to all panda loans, but rather as an effort to promote the healthy development of such loans.

Beijing Today contacted the newly-established China Giant Panda Protection Office under the State Forestry Bureau for their comment. Liu Dewang, director of the office, said the office has just finished an international bidding on giant panda conservation programs and will hold further hearings earlier this year.

Further official response to Tan's suggestion will be released after the office finishes its transition period, said Liu.

"There should be an overall scientific program concerning panda loans and donations," Tan argues. "Besides conservation of giant pandas and their habitats, human beings should consider more the ethics related to these issues."

Fuji Distributor Suspected of Smuggling

By Xiao Rong

A report in Monday's *China Business* accuses the Hong Kong based distributor of Fuji in China of smuggling.

The report claims Fujifilm Photo Products has been colluding with Chinese mainland companies over the past ten years to smuggle Fuji products into the mainland, resulting in a national economic loss of over ten billion yuan.

The smuggling case is linked with the notorious Xiamen Yuanhua smuggling ring, according to the report.

Zhuhai Zhenke Sensitization Materials Manufacturing, the only packing base of Fuji products in China, is also suspected of knowingly handling illegally imported Fuji products.

Zhuhai Zhenke, which is 51 percent owned by a company under China-Hong Kong Photo, was closed last month over violations of China's foreign investment enterprise regulations.

In response to nationwide media coverage of the story, China-Hong Kong Photo, the distributor of Fuji products in the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macau, issued a statement Monday, claiming "allegations of

'smuggling,' made in some media reports, are malicious and arising out of vested commercial interests."

The company also declared that its subsidiaries had abided by regulations and not engaged in any law breaking activities.

"The group reserves the right to take legal action against those incorrect and malicious reports for defamation and damage of goodwill, and has passed the case to its legal counsel for the appropriate actions," reads the statement.

When *Beijing Today* asked China-Hong Kong public relations officer Xiao Yan whether the statement also represented the position of the company's subsidiary, Fujifilm Photo, she responded with a definite "Yes."

Beijing Today also sought comment from Fuji Photo Film (China) Investment, which acts as the China headquarters of Fuji Photo Film. By press time, however, no reply had been received, although the company's press officer promised to respond soon.

In the *China Business* report, vice manager of Fuji Photo Film (China) was cited as claiming that Fuji Photo has at no time been involved in smuggling.



Photo by Tonystone

Big Furry Peace Ambassadors

China presented 23 giant pandas to nine countries between 1953 and 1982. Ping Ping, sent to the former Soviet Union in 1957, was the first; Fei Fei, given to Japan, was the last.

In the 1990s, the China Wildlife Conservation Association and the China Zoological Association reached an agreement with the International Wildlife Conservation Agency to loan giant pandas in pairs to overseas countries for periods of 10 years, for cooperative research with Chinese scientists. These loans usually attract annual

fees in the vicinity of \$1 million.

Pairs of giant pandas were sent to Kobe, Japan in 1994; Seoul, South Korea in 1995; and San Diego and Atlanta, in the United States in 1996 and 1999 respectively. Among these, Shi Shi and Bai Yun in the San Diego Zoo produced a baby on August 21, 1999, named Hua Mei.

In December 2000, two giant pandas, Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, were flown to the Washington National Zoo aboard a Federal Express flight dubbed "Panda One".

City Aims at Nine Percent GDP Growth in 2003

Beijing is targeting achieving nine percent growth in its gross domestic product (GDP) this year, a senior local official said in the city Tuesday.

Briefing the ongoing session of the Beijing Municipal People's Congress, Shen Baochang, director of the city

development planning commission, said that the municipal government also planned to create 200,000 new jobs to keep the registered urban unemployment rate below 2.5 percent.

In 2003, the Beijing government expects around 15 percent growth in

local fiscal revenues, an over 13 percent expansion in social fixed assets investment, an over 10 percent rise in social consumer commodities' retail rates and a 10 percent increase in foreign exports, Shen added.

According to the director, if all of

these economic targets are attained, the per capita disposable income for urban residents and per capita net income for rural residents in the Beijing area will post actual growth of over six percent.

(Xinhua)

New Faces Added to Olympic Committee

By Hou Mingxin

The Beijing Organization Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) announced on January 9 that its first open recruitment program (see our previous report on November 29, 2002) had come to an end. Of the 3,691 people that filed applications, 45 were given jobs with the committee.

According to the Human Resources Department of BOCOG, the 45 new employees have a wide range of work experience, but share advanced educational backgrounds, outstanding English language skills and other qualifications.

Eleven of the 56 positions BOCOG planned to fill through this activity remain open because too few qualified people applied. According to a committee spokesman, applications will still be received for the 11 vacancies.

The committee, established at the end of 2001, is expected to have 4,000 staff members by 2008, about 36 times the present number.

Now that this short-term campaign has finished, the committee is preparing to unveil a long-term talent-search program.

Because of the limited number of positions open now, some highly qualified applicants may not be employed immediately. However, all applicants' data will be entered into the human resources database at BOCOG, and some applicants will be re-considered for vacancies that open at the committee in the future, said the spokesman.

Opportunities on Horizon for Foreign Students

By Xiao Rong

Life for the thousands of foreign students at local universities may become easier thanks to efforts underway by the Beijing government. One coming reform is the establishment of special scholarships for outstanding foreign students.

"To attract more talented foreigners to our institutions of higher education, we have to establish a municipal government scholarship system," said Song Lijun, deputy director of the Office for International Cooperation and Exchange of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission.

She added that the local government is also working on a new work-study system that would allow students to work part-time while enrolled at universities.

According to Song, the previous strict ban on foreign students taking part-time jobs in Beijing was the result of former labor policies. Under the new work-study system, foreign students may be allowed to take teaching positions not only at universities, but also at primary and middle schools.

The commission is currently organizing an education-oriented tour to some developed countries to learn about their work-study systems for foreign students. Beijing's new system is set to take effect within this year, said Song.

On January 3, the commission also announced the list of 54 qualified universities and educational institutions that passed the first citywide evaluation of education of foreign students.

Over 25,000 foreign students enrolled at local universities in 2002, up five percent from the year before.



Lucy, Snoopy and other Peanuts characters celebrate with guests in Hong Kong Tuesday at the signing ceremony for the theme park "Snoopy's Fun Fun Garden." The Snoopy-themed park, to be built in Shunde, Guangdong Province, will be the world's biggest.

Photo by Xinhua

Bidding Starts for CBD Core Area Design

By Shan Jinliang

The creation of Beijing's Central Business District (CBD) got one step closer on January 12 when invitations began to go out inside China and abroad for designs for the district's core area. The final results of the bidding competition will be announced in May.

The competition is being organized by the Administrative Committee of the CBD, Beijing CBD Development and Construction Corp. and the Beijing Institute of Municipal Planning and Design. These organizations ran a similar bidding activity for gen-

eral plans for the CBD's design early last year.

The core of the CBD will cover 30 hectares in Chaoyang District with a planned total building area of one million square meters. It will be jammed with modern business facilities including top international office buildings, hotels, shopping centers and conference and exhibition centers.

Construction of the core of the CBD will begin this year and is scheduled to be completed by 2008, at which point 1,000 international companies are expected to have taken root in the area.

Applicants for the design competition can register by fax at 010 - 6583 5566 or by email at cbd@beijingcbd.com.cn or cbd@cosred.com.cn from

9 am January 12 to 5 pm February 15. All applications should include completed qualification forms, which can be downloaded from the official website of the CBD Administrative Committee (www.bjcbd.gov.cn) or taken in person during regular business hours from Beijing CBD Development and Construction Corp. at No.42, East Middle Third Ring Road, Chaoyang District from January 12 to 31.

Candidates will be notified if they qualify or not on February 10. Official bidding forms will be issued beginning 9 am on February 15 by Beijing CBD Development and Construction Corp. All submitted plans will be handled before given a final appraisal by the company on May 15.

Business Zone Land Up for Grabs

By Ema Ma

The land occupied by the Beijing Chemical Plant along the rim of the Central Business District (CBD) was purchased by the municipal government's land holding institution last week and will be publicly auctioned off before April.

The Beijing government has a plan to move 42 polluting plants that occupy 63.8 percent of the set area of the CBD to locations outside the Fourth Ring Road within five years. This scheme has attracted huge interest among developers to the land that will be emptied when these factories move.

Before the policy allowing the auction of the rights to use state-owned land went into effect last July, land

dealings were generally regarded as backdoor operations. It had long been an open secret that developers gained the rights to use land through strong connections or indirect means such as bribery.

As a result, developers that do not actually have the ability to construct a real estate project, making up over 70 percent of all developers in Beijing, earned massive profits by making shady land purchases and then reselling the property to other companies. Final prices are regularly over two times what the first developer paid. This has led to the artificial inflation of land prices, which should be an important, market-driven economic index.

In order to carry out the new auctions, a land holding institution was set up last April to coordinate between sellers and prospective buyers. All activities related to the trade of land use rights, including

the valuation of land, publicizing of information on properties and tender assessment must be organized by the land holding institution.

However, many developers have criticized the government's reform efforts as insufficient. One developer, who requested anonymity, described the current land transfer market as "semi-transparent at best because the results of bidding are not announced on the spot at auctions, and the process of tender assessment is still kept secret."

An unnamed official from the land holding institution responded, "There are other factors that must be considered for some special-purpose lands, such as land that will be developed for low-priced apartments. Also, developments in areas like the CBD or Olympic Park must conform to the overall plans for those areas. So, the highest bidders may not end up being the winners of auctions."

Foreign Funds to Flow to SOEs

By Hou Mingxin

In 2003, Beijing will introduce foreign investment in the reconstruction of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), according to a statement made by Zhou Yüqiu, vice-director of the Beijing Economy Commission, at an economics seminar on January 10.

Zhou suggested that efforts to attract foreign and private investment should be combined with the merging or moving of enterprises, regional development, and the bringing together of resources.

Since China adopting the reform and opening policy in late 1970s, a massive amount of foreign investment has pumped into Chinese enterprises, mostly in high-tech fields such as the information industry, with just a small fraction going to SOEs. Zhou expressed hope more foreign investment will be used towards the reconstruction and reform of SOEs.

He called on governments at all levels to continue SOE reform and help SOEs improve their market competitiveness through corporate restructuring and technological and managerial innovation.

Nine Banks Approved as Foreign Investor Trustees

By Hou Mingxin

Nine commercial banks have received approval from the People's Bank of China, China's central bank, to open trust businesses for domestic securities investment by qualified foreign institutional investors (QFIIs), according to a statement issued by the bank on Tuesday.

The approved banks are the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), the Bank of China, the Agricultural Bank of China, the Bank of Communications, China Construction Bank and China Merchants Bank, as well as the Shanghai branches of three overseas banks, Standard Chartered Bank, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and Citibank.

The approvals are a crucial step closer to the long-awaited government announcement of the first batch of QFIIs, which will be allowed to directly trade previously-Chinese-only A shares and bonds.

According to Zhou Yueqiu, general manager of ICBC's custodial department, ICBC was the first bank to receive QFII trustee approval from the central bank, getting the nod on December 31, 2002. ICBC is contacting potential QFIIs about custodial business and has already found some interest in such cooperation, said Zhou.

The nine banks can now apply to the China Securities Regulatory Commission for their trustee status, said a spokesman for the People's Bank of China.

Insurers Improve Air Travel Coverage

By Ema Ma

Long-awaited guidance clauses for airline passenger accident insurance designed by domestic insurers China Life, Pacific Life and Pingan Life were finally released last week.

Other insurance companies will set their own clauses based on this precedent, perhaps with minor alterations.

The new clauses increase coverage provided by each policy from 200,000 yuan to 400,000 yuan. Individual passengers can buy up to five policies, meaning the maximum insured amount is 2 million yuan, the same as in the earlier version of the clauses.

In another change, policies can be cancelled and their validity dates can be shifted to keep up with customers' schedules.

In order to get a policy, customers are now required to give more detailed information, such as their ID numbers, beneficiary names and signatures, instead of only providing their names and flight numbers.

White Rabbit Bares Teeth

By Ema Ma

Fluffy is a word counterfeiters will not be using for CLKO Entertainment, owner of the cartoon bunny known as Mashimaro that has become a phenomenon throughout China.

"No businesses operating in the name of Mashimaro in China has obtained a license from us. We are going to file lawsuits over the large-scale infringement of our rights," announced Choi Seung Ho, president of the company, last Sunday.

Mashimaro, a dumpy, white rabbit with narrow eyes, began life as the star of popular flash animations created in South Korea in 1999. The character quickly became a hit with people of all walks of life. Children and adults downloaded

animated shorts from websites and the rabbit's image showed up on bags, cups, toys and many more surprising items. Many Chinese refer to Mashimaro by nicknames such as "weird rabbit" or "bad rabbit."

CLKO Entertainment reported it made over 1,700 kinds of Mashimaro-related products last year, earning turnover of around 800 million yuan in South Korea. That figure is expected to reach over 1 billion yuan this year. However, in the two years since the "bad rabbit" hit the China market, the company estimates it has lost nearly 100 million yuan to rampant piracy.

"Our actions against copyright infringement will focus on books, website downloads, toys and stationery," said Choi.

Investigations conducted by the company have shown about ten domestic publishers have been involved in the illegal production of more than 20 kinds of books related to Mashimaro. Moreover, many well-known portal websites such as 163.com and TOM.com provide Mashimaro flash downloads and sell related commodities without permission, while major supermarkets openly sell unlicensed Mashimaro toys and other products.

Complicating the issue is the fact that a Chinese company has already registered a trademark for Mashimaro in the domestic market, blocking CLKO Entertainment from getting its own rightful trademark for the time being.

To support its anti-piracy



Kim Jae In, South Korea cartoonist and creator of the character Mashimaro said in November 2002: "All Mashimaro-related products sold in the China market are illegal."

Photo by Photocom

campaign, CLKO Entertainment has made the Guangming Daily Press its legal agent in China, giving the

press the right to publish Mashimaro comic books throughout the country before the end of this year.

Web Portals Want to Play Games

By Shan Jinliang

Online gaming looks set to become a top money-spinner for China's top three portal websites, with Sina's announcement of its entry into the business last week. Industry insiders reveal Sohu also has plans to get in on the action, while Netease has made a considerable profit from the business over the past two years.

Sina, China's most popular portal for news and information, announced the establishment of a joint venture, Sina Entertainment, with South Korean company NC Soft. The new company will be formally established at the end of this month. With a combined investment of US \$5 million, NC soft and Sina will control 49 percent and 51

percent respectively, according to NC Soft's website.

NC Soft is the largest online game publisher in South Korea, said Sina in a press release. The company's first project, Lineage, boasts of around 100 million members worldwide.

News of the joint venture has attracted much attention in the industry, particularly as Netease has seen its share price climb to \$15 on the Nasdaq in the wake of strong performance in its online games and short messages service areas.

Wang Yan, CEO of Sina Entertainment and president of Sina, while stopping short of denying Sina took the step after seeing Netease's success, said his company had been making preparations since the end of 2000. "We

are determined to be among the top three online gaming providers in China," Wang told *Beijing Today*, "and we will be the No.1 next year."

Asked about the impact of competition with Netease, Wang expressed confidence about the company's goal, saying Sina is experienced in the area of media and related online advertising.

Netease has also expressed confidence about its future in the online gaming business. A woman from Netease's Public Relations Department, who declined to give her name, said the company was more experienced, and planned to introduce both its own games and those developed by third parties.

Sina's Wang said many online players in China would choose foreign

games, especially from South Korea, and thus Netease's games will not have such a strong appeal. He added that in just a few days of free trial playing of Heaven, the number of online games players of Lineage has exceeded those of Netease's main game, Priston Tale. Netease responded, however, that the result might be different once the free trial period ends.

According to US research consultancy, IDC, China's online game market was worth 910 million yuan (\$109 million) in 2002, an almost 200 percent increase on 2001.

Sohu's marketing department has declined to make any comment on media speculation that the company also has plans to get on the Internet gaming bandwagon.

One Stop Kodak

By Ema Ma

When Kodak talks of expanding its business, one thinks of more film manufacturing plants or photo printing outlets opening countrywide. But with the digital revolution moving into high gear, film and paper is not enough anymore.

"In addition to the agreement with Nokia to provide China's first printing services for digital pictures taken with mobile phones, we have also obtained sole agent rights from Shanghai Grand Theatre and Shanghai Bashi Industrial to sell performance and long-distance bus tickets at our Kodak Express chain stores," Antonio Lee, general manager, Greater China Cluster, Kodak Consumer Imaging Branded Retail said at a press conference last week.

At the same time, the cooperation with FedEx to provide express delivery services from Kodak Express stores began operation this week after a nine-month trial in Beijing.

Claiming to possess China's biggest retail network, with 8,300 outlets in over 700 cities, Kodak seems intent on adding value to its existing stores and increasing profits from retailing.

"We just want to become the part of our customer's life and make them feel our all-purpose shops are as convenient as possible," although John Tseng, global vice president of Kodak neglected to disclose the detailed commission rate in an interview with *Nanfang Daily* in April last year, the figures speak for themselves. The booking system trial in Shanghai earned 24 million yuan for Kodak in 2002; one Kodak Express store owner earned 20,000 yuan commission from selling tickets to an Andy Lau concert, another store sold over 400,000 yuan worth of tickets to the Masters Cup tennis tournament in Shanghai last year.

Negotiations are underway on the Kodak Express booking network in Beijing, and a result is expected this April. "Maybe we could become the biggest on-line-booking system in China and even sell tickets for the 2008 Olympic Games. That will be a big market, worth US \$200 million!" said Lee.

It is believed that negotiations with airline companies on selling plane tickets is also on Kodak's schedule.

Asked about his vision of Kodak Express stores in the future, Lee said, "Reserve an airplane or train ticket or a seat at the theatre, pay your electricity and mobile phone bills, drop off delivery packages and, incidentally, pick up the photos you had printed ... everything is possible so long as it is beneficial for the customers, business partners and our bottom line."

Airports Attract

Foreign Investors

By Ema Ma

Frequent communication by Singapore's Changi Airport with airports in China is indication of a strong interest in cooperation with airports here. In early January, Changi chose Kunming Airport in southwest China for a new round of investigations. Hangzhou, Wuhan and Qingdao airports have also been highlighted for further research.

Analysts say any plan for investment in Chinese airports should follow one of the following two choices: one is to make large investments in purchasing shares in local airports. The other is to manage and assume the profit and loss of the airport together.

"As a capital-intensive industry, the bottleneck of high liability rate made it difficult for local airports to attract financing for further development. Also, loss of government support, with 129 airports being stripped of Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) status and cancellation of the levy on the aviation infrastructure fund, means the demand for capital has never been so urgent. The participation of foreign investors can strengthen solvency of local airports and improve management skills, according to one CAAC official.

The revised regulation on civil aviation industry issued last August lessens the restrictions on the foreign investment mainly in three aspects:

Firstly, foreign investors can invest in airports through purchasing shares on the stock market. Locally listed airports include Shenzhen Airport, Shanghai Airport, and Xiamen Airport. Among these, Shenzhen Airport is considered likely to be the first local airport to accept foreign investment.

Secondly, the 49 percent stake ceiling for foreign investors in airports has become more flexible.

Lastly, foreign investors can now participate in the management of such joint ventures. The original restriction that the positions of president and general manager could only be held by Chinese citizens has been removed.

Reasons to Be Cheerful ...



A shareholder smiles in front of a stock index screen in Beijing Tuesday. The Composite Index of the Shanghai Stock Exchange closed at 1,458.6 points, up 25.7 percent, while that of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange closed at 3010.6 points, up 46.6 percent.

Xinhua Photo

Xinhua Financial to Buy AFP Finance-news Outlets

By Shan Jinliang

The Hong Kong based Xinhua Financial Network announced Thursday last week that it would buy AXF Asia, the Asian financial news operations of Agence France-Presse (AFP), for an undisclosed sum, and that it planned to expand into providing news for television.

Xinhua Financial, which is partly controlled by China's official Xinhua News Agency, said it was buying news bureaus in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and eight other Asian countries.

The addition of these bureaus, which employ around 55 people, will bring the total number of Xinhua Financial employees to approximately 175. In turn, AFX News, the global financial news arm of AFP, will take an unspecified minority stake in Xinhua Financial.

"This alliance with AFX News, starting with our acquisition of AFX Asia, enables XFN to immediately become a leader in Asia while broadening our reach globally," said Xinhua Financial's chief executive, Fredy Bush.

Xinhua Financial spokeswoman Joy Tsang told *Beijing Today* on Monday the two sides will intensify exchanges on financial news, and "as a trend of media companies, we will be more focused on local news to follow the trend of media industry development, and the forces from AFX will enable us to provide the

best financial news to Asia."

Tsang said Xinhua Financial's current clients include banks and securities companies, as well as news re-distributors such as Bloomberg and Reuters, and that the cooperation with AFX will widen their client base.

According to AFX, the sale of its Asian financial unit is not a retreat from the market. Eric Scherer, chairman of London-based AFX News, commented, "This is an alliance of strong regional players who can each contribute in-depth local coverage capabilities to the partners. It is win-win for us all."

Scherer said that AFX and Xinhua Financial are creating a news exchange between the two entities as the start of a long-term relationship, with the enhanced AFX Asia coverage being made available to AFX clients elsewhere in the world and AFX news from Europe and elsewhere made available to AFX Asia clients.

"Each partner aims to be the leader in their own market, and the alliance will offer a major and credible alternative to existing global financial news providers," he added.

Tsang said her company is also looking for partners in North America and hopes to sign a contract with them in the first half of this year. She added Xinhua Financial is also struggling to be listed in the stock market, but the timetable and market for listing is yet to be set.

Xinhua Financial provides real-time financial information including index values for stock markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen. Shareholders include Nippon Venture Capital, PR Newswire, Funai Venture Capital and others, as well as the single biggest stakeholder, Xinhua News Agency.

Spring Festival Gift for Auto Buyers

By Tony Shaw

The Guangzhou-produced 2.4-liter Honda Accord Wednesday became the eleventh auto in the past four weeks to have its price cut. The new Accord is being sold at 259,800 yuan, while the 2.3-liter version costs 298,000 yuan.

The wave of price cuts began on December 25, covering models from mini-size to middle-grade to luxury autos. Industry experts say the price fall among Chinese cars signifies the automakers are endeavoring to stimulate the market and raise sales volume.

Guangzhou Honda Accord set its deluxe and standard Odyssey models at

278,000 yuan and 268,000 yuan last month, seen as a price cut of 20,000 to 30,000 yuan, to promote the coming new Honda Accord on January 15.

Just one day before the Accord price cut, Shanghai General Motors announced 4,000-yuan cuts on three of its current four Sail series autos, and a 3,000-yuan cut on the other.

Changfeng's Liebao models saw their prices slashed by 12 percent from January 1, with the luxury model now selling for 298,000 yuan, 50,000 yuan less than before.

On December 30, the First Automobile Works Huangli Corp cut the price of its Happy Envoy from 59,800 yuan to 50,800 yuan; Since January 1, Changhe Beidouxing reduced prices on all its autos by 1,000 to 10,000 yuan; Since January 1, Hongqi Mingshi are selling for 159,000 yuan, 10,800 yuan less than be-

fore. Between January 7 and 12, Dongfeng Citroen New Wave, Lingyang, "Auto" and Flyer cut prices by several thousand yuan.

A report in Ynet.com of *Beijing Youth Daily* attributes the rash of price cuts in the past month to two factors: The older models have to make way for some 30 new models in 2003, and a flood of imports have forced Chinese carmakers to reduce prices.

"It was an ordinary price adjustment for autos," said Yang Jianlong, an industry analyst from State Council Development and Research Center, "The same thing happened last year."

Yang said automakers try to upset the market balance and stimulate consumers to buy the cars. "The economic style cars reduced their prices to initiate the price cut campaign," he said, "and it changed the function/price of the economic cars, and if luxury cars keep their prices, buyers who tend to choose between economic and luxury cars will prefer the economic ones. Then came the price cut of luxury cars."

Yang said it is a healthy market competition, and it will enlarge the market scale since people in China have the ability and desire to buy cars just before the Spring Festival. "For a growing market," said Yang, "automakers and auto agencies do not need to cut prices too much, a little price cut will affect the market."



Guangzhou Honda rolled out its seventh-generation Accord on Wednesday.

Xinhua Photo

Rising US Economy Harassed by Uncertainties

Stocks end higher; Tech earnings in focus

New York, January 14 (Reuters) - Stocks ended higher on Tuesday as investors geared up for results from a number of key technology companies due later this week.

After the close, computer chip giant Intel reported better-than-expected earnings but said its capital expenditures for 2003 would be lower than last year.

Tech heavyweights set to report quarterly results this week include Apple Computer, IBM, Microsoft and Sun Microsystems.

International issues buffeted the market. The possibility of a US attack on Iraq seemed more imminent after President Bush warned Baghdad time was running out for the nation to come clean about any weapons of mass destruction.

On the economic front, excluding autos and parts, sales were flat, confirming that retailers suffered their most disappointing holiday shopping season in years. (Elizabeth Lazarowitz)

Unemployment at 8-year high of 6 percent

Washington, January 11 (AP) - US companies slashed 101,000 jobs in December as retailers limped through a cheerless holiday season, leaving unemployment at an eight-year high of 6 percent at the close of a year that many workers want to forget. (Leigh Strope)



Xiao Lian, Director, the Center for US Economic Studies, Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Science

The latest US economic slow-down has certain unique characteristics.

First, the decrease, stated at -1.3 percent, was better than the average -2.5 percent of the three previous recessions in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

Deflation, believed to be brought by the "new economy" in 2001, is the major factor.

The economic depressions in the first three crises prevented an increase in consumption, while this time it led to huge stock piles, preventing the increase of capital investment, and thus preventing the increase of production capability.

But, thanks to the so-called "new economy", factories and companies have higher efficiency and flexibility in dispatching their stockpiles.

The aggressive monetary policy and federal government's budgetary policy, together with the consumption stimulus policies, have played their roles.

External factors, such as the low world oil price and the federal government's increased military and defense expenditure driven by the terrorist attacks, also contributed to the US GDP growth.

The US economy is getting out of the recent recession, but a number of obstacles lie ahead.

1. Market consumption contribution to GDP is still limited.

2. The aggressive monetary policy and budget policy have opposite effects, such as the inflation pressure and the budget deficit.

3. The inflow of foreign investment to the US has decreased dramatically from 2000's \$335.6 billion, to 2001's \$132.9 billion, and 2002's less than \$50 billion.

4. The increasing foreign trade deficit hit \$450 billion in 2002 and is expected to further increase this year.

5. The dollar is weakening, caused by the huge foreign trade deficit.

6. Trade protectionism is waking up again in the US.

7. Corporate scandals exposed the problems in US accounting and auditing systems and damaged confidence in US economic credibility. Researchers believe at least one third of the publicly listed US companies have false accounting problems.

8. Other factors, such as the possible war against Iraq and terrorists, conflicts between Arabs and Israel and conflict between India and Pakistan could bring turmoil to the world oil market as well as threatening US benefits and strategies around the world and thus harm its economic recovery.

In one word, the US economy in 2003 could continue going in a "W Shape".



Airbus' CEO Noel Forgeard of France at the Airbus news conference in Paris, January 14, 2003 Reuters Photo

Airbus Aims to Beat Boeing

Paris, January 14 (Reuters) - European plane maker Airbus on Tuesday set its sights on toppling Boeing from its leadership of global aircraft deliveries next year, but expressed concerns about a fragile economy and the prospects of war in Iraq.

Thanks to a huge 120-plane order from British no-frills carrier EasyJet Plc in late December, Airbus had already won the annual race for new orders last year, posting gross 2002 orders for 300 new planes against 251 for Boeing. (Noah Barkin)

Canada Aims to Rival Biggest Diamond Producers in the World

Antwerp, Belgium, January 9 (AP) - Canada aims to become one of the world's largest diamond producers, Canadian Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew said Thursday in the world's top gem trading city.

Canada is widely known for its export of natural resources like soft wood lumber and oil, but recent finds in its northern territories over the past decade are starting to turn heads in the diamond industry.

Pettigrew said he was optimistic his country could soon find itself rivaling the world's top producers, Botswana and Russia.

So far, Canada ranks fifth in the world in diamond production, just behind Angola and South Africa. A large diamond mine, at Diavik, in the Northwest Territories, starts shipments to Antwerp in March. (Constant Brand)

HP Frustrated Probes, State Says

New York, January 13 (Reuters) - California's attorney general has accused Hewlett-Packard Co. and its lawyers of misleading investigators and frustrating state and federal probes into potential defects in millions of computers, the Wall Street Journal reported this week.

The state disclosed the "improper tactics" in court documents unsealed within the last two weeks in the Superior Court of California in San Francisco.

The Journal said the allegation surrounds \$27.5 million in consulting fees Hewlett-Packard paid to Phillip Adams, a computer expert who had alerted law-enforcement officials about suspected flaws in floppy-disk drives in Hewlett-Packard and other companies' PCs that can randomly delete or alter data without users' knowledge. (Andy Pasztor)

Kmart Cuts 37,000 Jobs, Closes 326 Stores

Detroit, January 14 (AP) - Kmart announced that it is closing 326 more stores and eliminating 37,000 more jobs as part of a plan to get out of bankruptcy by the end of April.

The discount chain that pioneered the blue-light special and introduced Martha Stewart styles to the masses will still have some 1,500 stores and 168,000 employees if the cutbacks are approved by a federal bankruptcy judge. But it will emerge from bankruptcy one-third smaller than it was when it went in.

Kmart filed for Chapter 11 protection from its creditors a year ago after failing to compete with Wal-Mart's low prices and Target's hipper merchandise. It closed 283 stores and cut 22,000 jobs last year but still lost more than \$2 billion. (Alexandra R. Moses)



Reuters Photo



Gul Ahmed, owner of an antique shop on Chicken Street of Kabul, Afghanistan, shows an old gun Saturday. Ahmed complains business is down now as foreign troops, especially U.S. forces, stopped visiting the street due to its security risk. Chicken Street is famous for carpet, jewelry and antique shopping among tourists. AP Photo

Hi, Dance with Me!

Unidentified visitors followed Honda Motor's humanoid robot ASIMO (Advanced Step in Innovative Mobility) performing dance during the first interactive showcase at the National Science Center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Monday, January 13.

The 52-kilogram, 1.2 meter-tall robot is the first robot that walks like a human. It can greet and recognize people, perform advanced commands, such as moving in the direction indicated by hand gestures and walking up and down stairs, and even demand applause from its audience.

The show in the Malaysian capital is part of its Asia Pacific tour. Some of ASIMO's 39 "siblings" are currently "employed" as receptionists and infotainment guides by seven companies, including IBM in Japan. Reuters Photo



Roh, Chaebol Executives Walk Tightrope

Seoul, January 10 (The Korea Times) - A chill came over the relationship between chaebol and the presidential transition team again as a senior executive of the Federation of Korean Industries (FKI) described President-elect Roh Moo-hyun as seeking to make South Korea a socialist economy.

Kim Sok-jun, FKI vice president told The New York Times last Saturday that Roh's transition team wants very rapid change in the system and its goal is "socialist". Similar remarks were reportedly echoed in private meetings of chaebol executives.

To achieve the goals of promoting transparency and improving the management of conglomerates, the transition team proposed such measures as allowing class action lawsuits and eliminating tax loopholes to prevent improper wealth transfers among the controlling families.

But some of them, like the "all-inclusive inheritance tax system," completely remove all loopholes for inheritance taxes and are regarded as the strongest step.

Another hard-line measure against chaebol studied by Roh's transition team is to make conglomerates give up control of their financial subsidiaries. (Seo Jee-yeon)

Analysts' Take:

A Balance of "Fairness and Justice" vs. "Efficiency and Growth"
Cao Shigong
Senior journalist
Economic Daily

Chaebols have their history in South Korea and have been a focus in all administrations' reforms.

The 1997 financial crisis in South Korea exposed the fundamental problems in the family controlled chaebols, such as poor management, overly-expanded businesses, capital and profit outflow, monopoly of the market and obstacles for small and medium sized enterprises, government-industry corruption and bribes. In the social sphere, problems also became more serious, like the gap between rich and poor.

But on the other hand, chaebols are the bastions of South Korea's national economy. All the problems have to be, and can only be solved through growth. That's why all South Korean governments wanted to and have to carry out the reforms of chaebols in a smooth way.

Kim Dae-jung's government pressed the chaebols to step up reforms after the 1997 financial crisis, but had to shift its



South Korean President-elect Roh Moo-hyun is under pressure from the country's chaebols. Roh's inauguration ceremony will be held on February 25. AP Photo

focus years later to growth, because only growth can keep the unemployment rate low.

The new president-elect Roh Moo-hyun is a lit bit different from Kim who focused more on the market economy and economic growth. Roh emphasizes social fairness and justice. Roh once declared he was a left-wing socialist welfare believer. That's why chaebols said he wants a socialist economy in South Korea.

It is a dance of "Fairness and justice" vs. "Efficiency and growth".

Not Despair, But Not Exactly Hope

Moscow (ITAR-TASS) - The results of the six month state registration of enterprises in Russia have been somewhat disappointing. It is estimated that of the total 3.2 million enterprises in the country, nearly 2 million have not registered under the new law first instituted on June 26 last year.

The law - which required all enterprises to register between July 1 and December 31 - is intended to simplify the process of opening or closing a firm in order to reduce state bureaucracy.

Under the law, the mere submission of documents to the local tax board is sufficient for registration.

The new law is also expected to help weed out firms that are formally registered but no longer active.

The tax ministry estimates that as many as 1.3 million of the 3.1 million currently registered enterprises are inactive.

Analysts' Take:

**Zhu Jingcheng, researcher
Chinese Institute of International Studies**

Russia had three "don't knows" before: don't know the exact amount of foreign debts; don't know the exact population; don't know the exact number of enterprises.

The original purpose of the registration was simple: to know the exact number of enterprises in the country and simplify the registration and approval procedures for new enterprises in the future.

Four factors lie behind the disparity.

A huge number of enterprises, estimated at 500 thousand, closed because of the 1998 financial crisis.

Many enterprises escaped heavy taxation by declaring their demise.

The official management is inefficient.

The country is too big. Geographic imbalance exists in enterprise registration. In some parts of the country, over 80 percent of enterprises have registered, while in others, less than 30 percent are registered.



Wang Guichun looks over the results of his Herculean reconstruction efforts on the floor of the Pinggu ICBC bank.

Photos by Cao Boyuan

Puzzle Work Saves Costly Blunder

By Chen Ying

Nearly one and half months of day-and-night, eye-straining work are set to finally pay off for Wang Guichun, a farmer from Pinggu County.

Wang and his family have managed to piece together 113 100-yuan bills that were chopped into small pieces after inadvertently being placed in a corn-grinding mill on November 20, 2002.

Beijing Today first reported the money blunder on November 30. The potential costly incident occurred because Wang and his wife kept a quantity of cash in a plastic bag hidden in a pile of corncobs. They planned to use the money to buy feed for their pigs.

On that fateful fall day, both had forgotten about the hidden cash when they turned on the mill and poured in the cobs to process that day. That is until the machine starting spitting out little pieces of 100 yuan bills.

The next day, Wang went to several local banks to see what could be done, receiving the same answer at each one — the banks would only exchange

notes that Wang could put back together.

After the story received extensive coverage in the local media, the family received several offers of assistance. Mounting experts from Rongbaozhai, a traditional frame and mounting store in Beijing, visited Wang and gave him some tips on how to efficiently sort and classify the pieces.

The reconstructed cash, 27 fourth-version bills and 86 fifth-version bills, are being stored in the Pinggu Branch of the Industrial and Commercial Bank. The branch will hand over the money to the Beijing Business Management Department of the People's Bank of China. Though the bills have been pieced back together, their watermarks, the key to proving currency's authenticity, cannot be discerned.

On behalf of Wang, the bank branch began to negotiate with the department this week over the rate for exchanging the bills for whole ones. Investigators from the People's Bank of China have gone to Wang's home, and the bank is expected to announce its decision in the next few days.

Mother Sues Care Center

By Sun Ming

The Beijing Muying Care Center, which provides care services for new mothers and their newborn babies, was named the defendant of a lawsuit filed last week, according to the Beijing Chaoyang District People's Court.

This is the first time that this kind of care center, which began appearing in Beijing two years ago, has been sued in the capital.

The plaintiff in the case is Wu Ying, 32. She has accused the center of not providing proper care for her newborn son, thereby violating her rights as a consumer and her son's right to health.

Wu entered the Beijing Muying Center on October 16 last year, five days after giving birth to her son, Sheng Guoqing. Sheng caught a cold on November 2.

"They just said it was 'no big deal'," Wu told *Beijing Today*. "But my son was coughing and sneezing seriously." Wu took her son to the Beijing Children Hospital the next day. There, Sheng was diagnosed with not only a cold, but also a fractured clavicle.

Wu believes that her son's illness and clavicle fracture were caused by neglect on the part of the care center. She is demanding the center pay her 80,000 yuan in compensation.

The Beijing Muying Care Center, however, has denied any responsibility in the case.

"We asked Wu to give her son more water on November 2," said Jin Ying, manager of the center. "Actually, her son had just a slight cough. It was unnecessary for him to get medical care."

Jin showed a *Beijing Today* reporter the care center's records for Wu and her son from October

16 to November 4. The November 2 record noted the baby was coughing lightly.

"If a baby or mother in our care was really sick, of course we would send them to a hospital," added Jin.

She explained that the care center has no right or obligation to provide medical care to newborn babies, according to its operating license. According to Jin, "Our center is just intended to provide care for healthy babies and mothers."

Moreover, Jin doubts that Sheng suffered the clavicle fracture in the center. "Wu gave birth to her son naturally. Maybe the boy's clavicle broke as he came out of his mother's womb," she said.

Wang Wei, director of the Children Department of the Beijing Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital, backed Jin's view. "Clavicle fractures are quite common among babies born naturally. These kinds of fractures heal on their own within several months."

The trial of the case will open in the Beijing Chaoyang District People's Court next month.

In China, care centers for mothers and newborns are popularly referred to as "yuezi" centers. Yuezi literally means month in Chinese, referring to mothers' needs to be taken well care of in the month after they give birth.

"Because they are new in Beijing, conflicts between yuezi centers and their clients are almost inevitable," Lei Kun, a professor of sociology at Beijing University, told *Beijing Today*. "I think there is need for more comprehensive guidance regulations for yuezi centers to make sure they offer people good services."

Foreigners Invited to Fair Festivities

By Su Wei

On the second day of the Chinese lunar New Year (February 2), dozens of foreigners are expected to participate in a one-day activity dubbed "Foreigners Celebrate the Year of the Sheep" at the Changdian Temple Fair.

Organized by the fair committee, foreigners can join in performances such as *yangge* dancing and wrestling, or get made up as Ming and Qing-era salespeople and imitate the lilting traditional calls of vendors of cigarettes, wine, vegetables and other goods.

People with interest in food can learn to make *tanghulu*, sticks of sugarcoated hawthorn, before going to the local families' homes to make dumplings for lunch.

Most of the people that have already applied to take part hail from Europe and the Americas, including the UK, Canada, the US and Brazil.

The Changdian Temple Fair, which will be centered around the Liulichang antique street and Xinhuaajie, is the only open fair for Spring Festival. This is the third year this fair will be held since it was shut down for 37 years in 1963.

Foreigners interested in the free one-day activity can apply before January 26 by calling Miss He Yanchun at 010-8354-0679 from 8:30 am to 4:30, Monday through Friday (she can speak simple English). Organized groups are preferred.



The Harry Potter marketing juggernaut has landed in Xiaoxitian.

Photo by Li Shuzhuan

Licensed Store Casts Spell over Harry Potter Fans

By Lily Li

The past few weeks have been exciting ones for domestic fans of Harry Potter.

Star of the Harry Potter movies Daniel Radcliffe came to China on December 21 last year, after which it was announced that the second film in the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, would debut next Friday, ahead of original schedule.

Then, on Wednesday of last week, a Harry Potter store opened in the China Film Group cinema in Xiaoxitian. The store is stocked with over 200 books, stationary sets, clothes and toys involving the fictional young magician.

La Peikang, sales manager of China Film Group, said the store represents the first time that a company in China has officially sold film-related products and is one part of the group's efforts to promote the new Harry Potter mov-

ie. Getting the rights to introduce licensed Potter products took over half a year of negotiations between the group and Warner Bros, owner of the films.

China Film Group received the rights to bring the products to the domestic market after promising to combine profits earned from ticket and product sales, firmly resist piracy, and seek punishment against any party involved in such actions.

One million yuan worth of products went on sale in the group's 100 cinemas nationwide as of Wednesday to feed public interest in the opening of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. La estimated sales of Harry Potter merchandise will reach at least 30 million yuan.

He added that China Film Group will have the rights to market products related to every foreign film it introduces in the future.

By Shan Jinliang

The Beijing Green Kids Toy Library, the first establishment of its kind in the country, opened to kids and parents in the Children's Library of the Imperial College (Guozijian) in Dongcheng District on January 10.

The concept of a toy library, a place for children to freely play with educational, fun toys, was invented in Sweden in 1960. The Green Kids Toy Library was set up by the Children's Library and Beijing Good Ideas Culture Exchange Corp.

Zang Wei, founder of the unusual library, told *Beijing Today* she hopes it will be a place for kids to come and have good, clean fun. The library's collection currently includes 216 toys, including Lego and Barbie dolls. Kids of all nationalities are welcome at the library, added Zang.

Robbed Taxi Driver Arrested

By Su Wei / Qi Hong

The victim of a robbery was arrested on January 9 for giving false testimony to the Beijing No. 2 Procuratorate.

The man, taxi driver Yang Zhiqiang, perjured himself in order to keep the perpetrator of the robbery from going to prison.

On June 29, 2001, near Xizhimen, Yang picked up a young man who claimed to be an escaped prisoner and showed Yang an alleged handgun. The young man demanded money and Yang handed him 400 yuan without any resistance.

As soon as the thief exited the cab, Yang dialed 110. The police captured the young man within several minutes.

The thief, An Le, who is in his early 20s, confessed to robbery with an imitation pistol to the Beijing police and was sentenced to four years in prison by the People's Court of Chaoyang District.

Believing his sentence to be too harsh, An filed an appeal with the No. 2 Beijing Intermediate People's Court. In support of the appeal, Yang provided a statement to the court saying An never robbed him.

The statement explained that the original incident was no more than a dispute between the two men over Yang's failure to use the meter for An's ride. Afraid that An would complain about the gaff to his taxi company, Yang said he agreed to give An 400 yuan to buy his silence. In the statement, Yang claimed that he "fabricated the robbery" in his report to the police.

The procuratorate conducted a thorough investigation over the following several months, including a full interrogation of Yang. During those procedures, the taxi driver admitted to having received 2,500 yuan from An's father, An Pingyuan, and An's lawyer, Tie Zhenduo, to provide fake testimony to back up the appeal.

Explaining why he agreed to commit perjury, Yang wrote in a statement to the police "in fact, I did not suffer too much. Just think about him. For 400 yuan he was put into prison. The price for him is too great!"

On November 27, 2002, Yang and An Pingyuan were arrested under suspicion of interference in bearing witness. The police are still searching for Tie Zhenduo, who has disappeared.

Crane Crashes in Zhongguancun

By Su Wei

Pedestrians and drivers got a close scrape at 1:30 Sunday afternoon when an over 50-meter-long tower crane arm fell onto a busy road from a construction site along Zhongguancun Street in Haidian District.

Fortunately, no one was injured or killed in the accident, though the huge severed arm blocked traffic for around two hours.

"I had just stopped near Hailong Mansion opposite the construction site at the Zhongguancun Science and Technology Trading Mansion," recalled Nie Jian, a taxi driver with the Wangquansi Taxi Company. "A policeman at the middle of the intersection ran over to the bus station in front of the construction site, shouting 'run away!' at the several people standing at the station."

"Then the arm started swinging around faster and suddenly broke off. First it fell onto the wall around the construction site, smashing it, then it fell onto the road and flattened the bus station and the partition in the middle of the road."

Luckily everyone at the station had fled by the time the crane arm came smashing down. Nie said, "Waves of screams came out of bus 717, which suddenly braked a few meters away from the station."

Local media reported the only casualty in the incident was a woman who fainted after witnessing the fall and was immediately sent to the hospital. *Beijing Youth Daily* and other papers said the reason there were no injuries is that "the accident happened on Monday at an intersection when the red light was on."

Policemen arrived within five minutes and blocked all nearby streets, crossings and platform bridges. Traffic did not flow again until two hours later, after the fallen crane had been cut into pieces with electric welding equipment and hauled away by workers from the construction site.

The Haidian Branch of the Beijing Public Security Bureau has detained four construction workers from the Lifa Construction and Installation Company, based in Nantong, Jiangsu Province, on grounds of work negligence. The Beijing Construction Committee has ordered the company to halt all its construction projects in the capital and will impose a fine for the incident.



Photo by Cao Boyuan

Innovative Library Loans Fun



Photo by Shan Jinliang

By Chen Ying

Should artworks taken from countries centuries ago be returned? 19 international museums and institutions issued a declaration at the end of last year saying that it would be improper to return ancient overseas artworks to their original countries (see below). This week, China issued its response.

In *Beijing Youth Daily* on January 13, China's Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Program (CLCRRP) said that the museums' declaration contradicted the spirit of the *UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (1970). The convention is the first agreement of its kind to be accepted worldwide. It seeks to protect cultural property against theft, illicit export and wrongful removal.

A great number of museums in Europe, America and Japan, including the Louvre Museum in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, have collected thousands of artworks from other countries. Perhaps the best-known example is the "Parthenon Sculptures" owned by the British Museum. The Greek government has been angrily demanding their return for years and the British government has steadfastly refused. Last year the Greek government suggested the compromise of a long-term loan so that visitors to the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens would be able to see the sculptures.

Greece is not alone. Egypt, China and many other countries have joined the clamor for ancient artworks removed over the centuries to be returned, especially those looted during wars or acquired through illegal means.

Poly Art Museum in Beijing grabbed the headlines recently after spending 30 million Hong Kong dollars to buy three famous bronzes taken from Yuanmingyuan (the Winter Palace) at an auction in Hong Kong in May, 2000. Some Chinese museums have adopted the position that it's unreasonable for them to have to spend millions in taxpayers money to re-acquire Chinese artworks. The alternative view is that Poly Art Museum has performed a service to the country because at least the bronzes are now back in China, as opposed to residing in some foreign museum.

How do you get it back?

China's Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Program (CLCRRP) was founded on October 18 last year. It's a symbolic date. October 18 1860 was the day when combined armies of England and France sacked Yuanmingyuan, leading to the plunder of thousands of invaluable artworks. *Beijing today* interviewed Wang Weiming, the chief executive of the program, and Zhao Hong, the assistant to the director.

Beijing Today: In the museums' declaration, they said that they objected to illegal traffic. But they also said the ancient artworks they house "were acquired under conditions that are not comparable with current ones." What do you think?

CLCRRP: *It's true a great number of artworks were exported in perfectly normal ways. For instance, many artworks were conveyed to Japan during the Tang Dynasty. And it is to the credit of China that people in other countries research and appreciate the glories of Chinese civilization. But many more articles were exported through illegal means. Just because someone paid for something that had been looted from China does not mean that they are the legal owners. The current owners should return such articles.*

Beijing Today: The director of the British Museum says the museum is the best possible place for the sculptures from the Parthenon to be displayed. What do you think?

CLCRRP: *The artworks would be more beautiful and awe-inspiring in their original environment. For instance, many heads of sculptures in Longmen Grotto in Henan Province have been displayed in overseas museums. Would you say those museums are the best place to appreciate the sculptures? It's hard for the visitor to imagine the body, let alone the original environment the sculptures were located in. Furthermore, it's almost impossible for tourists to understand the historical background of the sculptures.*

Beijing Today: China has got several valuable artworks back through auctions. Do you think this is a valid method of re-acquiring artworks?

CLCRRP: *Those artworks were mainly bought by private collectors. The most famous artworks are simply priceless so it will not be possible to acquire them through auction as they will not be made available in the first place.*

But it's an increasing trend to buy back artworks. The key lies in setting up a proper mechanism and uniting all parties to participate in such an event. The government can also encourage enterprises to purchase and donate artworks to the state.



The British Museum's controversial Parthenon Sculptures

Photo provided by Webshots

Give it Back!

Chinese organization rejects museums' declaration



The three bronzes now on display in the Poly Art Museum

Declaration by 19 museums

The international museum community shares the conviction that illegal traffic in archaeological, artistic, and ethnic objects must be firmly discouraged. We should, however, recognize that objects acquired in earlier times must be viewed in the light of different sensitivities and values, reflective of that earlier era. The objects and monumental works that were installed decades and even centuries ago in museums throughout Europe and America were acquired under conditions that are not comparable with current ones.

Over time, objects so acquired — whether by purchase and gift — have

Signed by the Directors of:
The Art Institute of Chicago
Bavarian State Museum, Munich (Alte Pinakothek, Neue Pinakothek)
State Museums, Berlin
Cleveland Museum of Art
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

become part of the museums that have cared for them, and by extension part of the heritage of the nations which house them. Today we are especially sensitive to the subject of a work's original context, but we should not lose sight of the fact that museums too provide a valid and valuable context for objects that were long ago displaced from their original source.

The universal admiration for ancient civilizations would not be so deeply established today were it not for the influence exercised by the artifacts of these cultures, widely available to an international public in major museums. Indeed, the sculpture of classical Greece, to take but one example, is an

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Louvre Museum, Paris
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence

excellent illustration of this point and of the importance of public collecting. The centuries-long history of appreciation of Greek art began in antiquity, was renewed in Renaissance Italy, and subsequently spread through the rest of Europe and to the Americas. Its accession into the collections of public museums throughout the world marked the significance of Greek sculpture for mankind as a whole and its enduring value for the contemporary world. Moreover, the distinctly Greek aesthetic of these works appears all the more strongly as the result of their being seen and studied in direct proximity to products of other great civilizations.

Philadelphia Museum of Art
Prado Museum, Madrid
Rijks museum, Amsterdam
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
The British Museum

What They Say

Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum

The British Museum is the best possible place for the sculptures from the Parthenon to be displayed.

The range of the British Museum's collections is worldwide. Here the visitor can move from Egypt to the Aztecs, from Africa to Greece and Rome, from ancient Britain to ancient China. The collections provide a uniquely rich setting for the Parthenon sculptures as an important chapter in the story of human cultural achievement and civilization. It is this story which the British Museum exists to tell.

The Parthenon itself has been much damaged since antiquity. The restoration of the integrity of the building is thus an unachievable goal. Only about 50% of the original sculptures survive in a state fit for display, of which about half are in the British Museum. The other half are in Athens already.

A select group of key objects, to

which without doubt the Parthenon sculptures belong, needs to be permanently accessible to the Museum's visitors who come here expecting to see them. To lend these objects would seriously impair the Museum's ability to fulfill its core function for the visitor.

The British Museum is a truly universal museum of humanity, accessible to 5 million visitors from around the world every year entirely free of entry charge. Only here can the worldwide significance of the Parthenon sculptures be fully grasped.

Harold Holzer, Vice President for Communications and Marketing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

This museum signed the declaration because of our role in educating and enlightening audiences about the cultures of the entire world. Without the works and art, there would be no reason for great museums to exist. There would be no way for people to be introduced to the culture of the East here without the works of art. China's culture has enlightened Americans for

a hundred and twenty years in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Besides, we already have this museum. How would we fill two million square feet without these works of art?

Jiang Yingchun, curator, Poly Art Museum

We have to admit the overseas museums have some advanced techniques for protecting the artworks. But there's no reason why we can't adopt those techniques ourselves. It's just an excuse for these museums to say they won't return the artworks because they're worried they won't be protected properly.

It's like saying that slaves were always hungry before the slave traders took them to America and that they were at least fed by their owners. Would you praise the slave traders for protecting slaves? Besides, whether or not we have the ability to display the artworks properly and whether the museums should return them are two completely different arguments.

Expert View

As an expert in museum studies, Ildiko DeAngelis, Director, Museum Studies Program, George Washington University, received *Beijing Today's* interview.

Beijing Today: So much of China's cultural heritage has been taken abroad in the past two hundred years. Do you think the Chinese government or individual collectors should get it back? Do you think these articles still belong to China?

Ildiko: *I believe that cultural property is the common heritage of all mankind. All of us have a duty to protect not only our own cultural property but also that of other nations for the good of all mankind.*

Much cultural property was removed from their countries of origin over thousands of years due to many factors including war and looting. Many of these objects have ended up in museums throughout the world.

Museums are facing requests for the return of some of these objects. The problem I see is where does this stop? Are we going to empty every museum around the world and return objects to the geographic boundaries in which they were created? What happens then to the idea of a common cultural heritage?

Beijing Today: Do you think China should buy back artworks, regardless of how much they cost?

Ildiko: *If objects that cannot be claimed by China through legal means (such as seizure of stolen property) appear in the art market, then its only avenue may be to purchase the objects. For economic reasons it would be impossible for China to purchase back everything that appears in the market of Chinese origin.*

Perhaps the purchase route should be limited to objects of rarity or special importance. More cost effective measures might be to spend money on state action to prevent looting and exploitation of its cultural sites, thereby preventing such objects from being illicitly exported abroad.

Beijing Today: Some Chinese think these articles should stay in overseas museums if China's museums can't keep the works properly. What do you think?

Ildiko: *The ability to care for objects, to preserve them for future generations should be a consideration in the cultural property restitution debate. I am sure that Chinese museums would be able to adopt modern preventative conservation techniques to ensure the survival of its cultural property.*

Beijing Today: What are the laws governing the rights to articles that museums have obtained from other countries?

Ildiko: *Generally there are two kinds of laws. One is domestic law and the other is international treaty law. Many countries have domestic laws that prevent the export of their cultural property. These laws are effective only in that country. For example, if an object was illegally exported from Country A, and imported into Country B, its status may be legal in Country B because only Country A's export laws have been broken.*

However, many museums refuse to collect these objects on ethical grounds. The chief international legal convention covering this subject is the UNESCO Convention of 1970. This convention set up a framework for international cooperation. In some cases if both Country A and B are signatories to this convention, then Country B may recognize the laws of Country A and require return of the object illegally exported from Country A.

Museums in the United States follow the requirements of the US law implementing the UNESCO convention that was passed and became effective in the US in 1983. That law covers any objects illegally removed from the country of origin after 1983.

By Su Wei

For many of the women in Sunhe neighborhood, Chaoyang District, who have an educational background no higher than junior middle school and few technical skills, working as a housekeeper is an enviable option, one that earns them a monthly salary of around 1,500 yuan.

There are over 300 housekeepers in Sunhe, who are taking advantage of the spate of building in the area and the numerous foreign families who have moved in. But it's not all plain sailing, as *Beijing Today* found out after interviewing three women, all of whom had been recognized by the local Women's Association as outstanding housekeepers.

Not an easy life

Yuan Qingjun, Chairman of the Women's Association, Sunhe Branch, says the association is concerned about the difficulty these housekeepers have in establishing a "balanced" relationship with the families they work for. "The housekeepers should not be haughty, but they shouldn't be humble either," she says.

The three housekeepers *Beijing Today* interviewed said they feel they are more likely to be looked down upon by wives of some Asian families, especially those from Hong Kong.

"I am expected to call the wives 'Taitai' (Madam) and the husbands 'Xiansheng' (Sir)," says Dou Guifeng, 35, with around seven years' experience as a housekeeper. "It reminds me of the life of a servant in a rich family before the founding of the People's Republic of China." She says when she worked for a couple from Hong Kong, "Taitai" used to keep a close eye on whatever she did, especially when she cleaned the house.

Sun Ying, 35, with six years' experience, concedes wives from other Asian countries are similar to those in China's mainland in testing whether the housekeeper is reliable or not. "But they have a variety of ways of doing this."

She recalls that on the second day of her working for a South Korean family, the wife said she would go out for the whole of the following day and left the key to Sun. "I came to their home as usual in the morning. Upon opening the door, I found 'Taitai' sitting on the sofa drinking tea. 'Taitai' explained that she had something important to do at home." Sun says she would not have known it was a test if "Taitai" had not told her just before the family returned to South Korea.

Li Yufen, 40, with five years' experience of working for west-

ern families, revealed just how picky some of the foreign families were. "After the first day of working with a Danish family, I was told that I was a careful and responsible person suitable for the job. The reason was that I was the only one who had cleaned the dirt on the floor under the refrigerator." She might not have kept the job otherwise.

Each of the three housekeepers said that they were criticized for exceeding their responsibilities. "Few Chinese families would feel unhappy if a housekeeper gave a hand to look after a child, even if she had not been required to do so," says Li. "They would be more likely to appreciate her kindness. But this is not

the case with western families."

Sun agrees, saying that "Xiansheng" once threatened to reduce her salary after she had tried to comfort the daughter who had been locked in her room, even though the girl was crying bitterly. "I felt wronged," she says. "But from then on, I never bothered doing anything they did not ask me to do."

Li complains that westerners are not as generous as she once thought, though she concedes that superficially they are easier to get along with. "Housekeepers in western families are more equal. I can call them by their names instead of 'Taitai' and 'Xiansheng' and they all provide a bathroom for me, which is

not provided by some Asian families though it is supposed to be. But they are less willing to pay me as much as I should get."

She recalls overhearing some of the western families she has worked with saying that a monthly salary of 500 yuan should be enough for a Chinese housekeeper, instead of the more common monthly salary of 1,000 yuan. "But they always say to their friends that I am the best housekeeper in the neighborhood," says Li.

She says her current monthly salary with an American family is 1,500 yuan, 100 yuan less than that she received from a Danish family she used to work for. "But the house of the American family

is much larger, with an area of more than 500 square meters. Even the family concedes that it is too big and that they did not have a housekeeper to do the cleaning in America. They agree that it is a hard job for me."

"Every day they tell me that 'Our house is the most beautiful one,' or 'What a good job you have done!' But they never express their gratitude by increasing my salary."

Li says money is not her only concern, as she says her family is already one of the richest in Sunhey. "What I care about is that my salary should reflect my value since they recognize my value. I am asking for what I should have."

The wife of an American family she worked for used to ask her to work overtime for at least half an hour every day with no payment for the extra hour. Li says the wife once asked her to work on New Year's Day saying that she didn't think it was a holiday for Chinese people.

English training needed

Yuan Qingjun of the Sunhe branch of the Women's Association says of all the training classes provided, English is the most popular one among housekeepers. "The monthly salary for a housekeeper capable of speaking English is around 2,600 yuan compared to 1,500 yuan for those unable to speak English," says Yuan.

Sun and Dou say the reason they take English training is not to do with the higher salary but their eagerness to work for western families. "The more experience you have, the more you can earn," adds Sun.

Li says being able to speak English also helps her protect her rights. She says whenever she has sought help from the staff of the local estate management company to translate her complaints, the staff appeared afraid of upsetting the family. "I would keep on talking for several minutes, but then the translator would finish within one minute."

She recalls that she once heard the wife of a family she worked for calling her a fool. "I questioned her but she insisted she never used this word. When I complained to the community staff, they told me I might have heard the word incorrectly. But I am sure she used that word."

But there are benefits

Although the three interviewed housekeepers have different problems with the families they work for, they all express their appreciation towards these families. They all feel they have picked up some useful tips, especially from the way foreign families bring up their children.

Li says how shameful it is that local children use dirty words, especially teenagers. By contrast, she is impressed by the politeness of western children.

Sun says she was also impressed by the frugal philosophy of the South Korean family she once worked for. "If one of the children did not drink up a cup of tea, they asked me to cover the cup and put it in the refrigerator. Few Chinese families would bother with this."

Another benefit they mention is that they have picked up some handy new skills about the house. They find they are now able to clean their own house much more quickly than before.

Photo / Tony Stone

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Human Smuggling Ring Bust

By Sun Ming

The biggest gang of illegal immigrant smugglers in half-a-century in China was sentenced in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province on Tuesday last week.

From 1998 to 2000, the gang rented nine vessels and shipped 730 illegal immigrants to Japan and America from seaports in the coastal Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Liaoning and the municipalities of Shanghai and Tianjin.

The sentences for the 42 members of the gang ranged from two years to life imprisonment.

The gang conducted 38 illegal immigration runs and failed only four times. The group managed to smuggle 400 illegal immigrants into Japan. Police didn't catch up with Chen Wenshu, the head of the gang, until 2002. He was arrested in Fujian on April 23 last year.

The smuggling operation was exposed in November 2000, after a group of 17 stowaways were discovered by coast guards in Japan.

Japanese and Chinese police began to cooperate on the case from November 2001 and finally uncovered the web of the human-smuggling gang nearly six months later.

CCTV broadcast an exclusive report on the gang in News Probe on Saturday last week.

Renting ocean freighters to transport illegal immigrants

Chen Wenshu launched the smuggling racket in 1998.

Unlike other human smugglers, who mainly used fishing boats, Chen hit on the idea of using ocean freighters. By bribing the right people he could ensure far tighter secrecy this way.

CCTV said that the smuggling ring involved 100 shipping

company personnel seduced by the lucrative rewards Chen offered them. In return, they provided the gang with ships and the guise of being legitimate leasing and business partners.

Wang Cheng, the head of the shipping department of the Anhui Ocean Shipping Company, accepted huge sums in bribes from Chen. CCTV didn't reveal the exact sum Wang got, but Wang admitted that he had the nickname "Millionaire Wang".

Wang not only asked his manager Yao Xue to rent vessels to Chen, but also introduced Chen to Xu Wei, the manager of the Anhui Meilinghua Shipping Company.

The two shipping companies rented Chen vessels five times altogether from 1998 to 2000. Chen always paid them in cash.

"We were paid US\$2,400 per day for a vessel," Yao Xue told CCTV. "But for legal use, we would only have got US\$1,200 per day."

Where did the illegal immigrants hide?

Chen arranged to build special storage tanks below deck to hide the stowaways. "You would never have found the storage tanks unless you demolished the whole ship," he told CCTV.

In order to build the tanks, Chen bribed personnel from the Ningbo Zhonghai Shipping Company.

Lin Hailong, the manager of Ningbo Zhonghai Shipping Company, accepted bribes worth 500,000 yuan altogether from 1998 to 2000.

Lin and his workers built storage tanks in discreet places in the vessels that Chen rented. All the storage tanks were under the deck, but their positions were different from vessel to vessel.

"We knew a lot about ocean freighters, so we knew where to



build a secret storage tank," Lin told CCTV.

In the vessel No. 2 Zhengfeng, they built a 10-square-meter storage tank under the storage room for anchor and chains where there was another storage room for fresh water. Lin and his workers placed an iron board above the fresh water to create their tank. The entrance of the storage tank was on the floor of the upper storage room and was covered by anchor and chains.

The tank was only 1.5-meters high but it had room enough to cram in nearly 20 stowaways. Chen transported 35 illegal immigrants from Xiamen to Japan two times with the No. 2 Zhengfeng in 1999 and 2000.

In 1999, Chen transported 79 illegal immigrants one time with the No.2 Anhua. The storage tanks in the vessel were located between the freight house and engine room. In order to contain more stowaways, Lin and his workers used two iron boards to divide one storage tank into three.

The entrances of the storage tanks were also very secret. One was on the floor of a guest room and was covered by a carpet, the other was on the wall of the engine room and was covered by a

tool chest.

Sure enough, the storage tanks were never found. It was only after the illegal immigrants went ashore that they were discovered.

Making fake sailor's certificates for illegal immigrants

Wang Jiaqiang, the manager of the Dalian Wufeng Shipping Company, accepted bribes worth 2,600,000 yuan from Chen. He not only rented ocean freighters to Chen four times in 1999 and 2000, but also created special sailors' certificates for the stowaways.

"My vessels usually need 17 staff. I applied to add six more," said Wang who got six more certificates in 1999. He simply replaced the photos on the certificates with those of the stowaways.

Getting on the ship

The illegal immigrants usually got on a fishing boat first which then took them to meet the ocean freighter in a quiet place so they could board the ocean freighter in secret.

Sometimes this wasn't necessary and the illegal immigrants simply got on board the vessels in the port. "The inspection in China's seaports is usually very strict," said Chen. "But we still found chances."

It usually took one week to get

to Japan. Once the ocean freighter left the seaport, the stowaways would come out of the storage tank. They ate and slept with the boat's staff who had already been bribed to keep quiet.

"They would hide in the storage tank again before the vessel arrived in Japan," said Chen. Chen admitted that it was dangerous for the stowaways to hide in the storage tanks due to the lack of air. They couldn't get out of the storage room until the inspectors left. "They usually had to stay in it for at least one day," said Chen.

Chen's gang was nearly exposed in June 1998. When Japanese workers were unloading cargo from the Anhua freighter, they heard a noise from the vessel. It came from 25 stowaways who had been stuck in the storage tank for one whole day and were suffocating. They were knocking on the wall to seek help.

"I was startled," Zhang Zhengguo, the captain of the vessel, told CCTV. "I told the Japanese workers that some of our Chinese staff were working in the vessel."

Zhang waited until all the Japanese workers had left before opening the storage tank.

How did the racket work?

Below is the conversation between the CCTV reporter Wang Zhi and Chen Wenshu:

Wang: How much did you charge?

Chen: For one person to go to Japan cost 150,000 yuan. To go to America would cost 250,000 yuan.

Wang: When did they pay you the money?

Chen: After they arrived. We had some people who were responsible for receiving the illegal immigrants. The stowaways were locked in a room first after they left the vessel. We asked them to call their family members one by one. They told their family members they had arrived and then their family members would pay us the money.

Wang: Could all of them pay

you such a huge amount of money in cash?

Chen: Some people couldn't.

Wang: What would you do to these people?

Chen: They were dishonest so we dealt with them.

Wang: If illegal immigrants died on the way to Japan or America, would you ask their family members to pay?

Chen: No.

Xu Fei, the manager of Anhui Meilianhua Shipping Company, told CCTV that he witnessed an illegal immigrant jumping from the second floor in order to escape from Chen's followers in Japan in 1999.

Exposed

The smuggling racket only came to light in November 2000 when Japanese coast guards discovered 17 stowaways who had been on board the Fuyuan ocean freighter bound from Xiamen to Japan.

Zhang Zhengguo, the captain of the Fuyuan, told the Japanese authorities that the owner of the vessel was one Zhu Shaowei and handed over Zhu's name card. But the Japanese police suspected that it was a false identity and began investigating.

"The name card said that Zhu was the manager of Guangzhou Fengsheng Shipping Company, but we dialed the number on the card and it was a hotel in Guangzhou," said Sun Qin, a detective from Jiangsu Province. "It was a fake name card."

The police discovered that the Fuyuan was owned by Anhui Meilinghua Shipping Company. Xu Fei, the head of the company became the first main suspect.

Xu Fei admitted that he had rented the vessel to Chen Wenshu. In April 23 2002, police finally caught Chen in Fujian.

On January 7, 2003, the major conspirators Chen Wenshu and Wang Cheng were sentenced to life imprisonment. Xu Fen and Yao Xue, the managers of the two shipping companies, were sentenced to 15 years in prison.

(Source: CCTV)

By Ivy Zhang

Four people involved in smashing three Shuangling air-conditioners in public in Nanjing and Shanghai appeared in the court last Friday following their arrest on a charge of damaging the brand's reputation.

This case has brought the issue of consumer rights back to the national media's attention. It's the first such case since the revision of China's Criminal Law in 1997 in which the crime of damaging a brand's reputation was introduced.

If found guilty, the four face penalties ranging from a fine to two years in prison.

What's the rumpus?

Chen En, the manager of Qianjiang Hotel in Lianyungang city, Jiangsu Province, purchased 84 air-conditioners made by Shanghai Shuangling Air-conditioning in April 2001, at a cost of about 270,000 yuan. They paid an initial installment of 100,000 yuan.

Chen, along with his two partners, Jin Yuegen and Jin Jiayang, then refused to pay the remaining 170,000 yuan in November that year, on the grounds that the air-conditioners had quality problems. They also requested compensation. The manufacturer denied there were any quality problems and the dispute escalated.

On March 14, 2002, one day prior to China's Consumers' Rights Protection Day, Chen and his party brought a Shuangling KFR-34GW wall-mounted air conditioner worth about 3,000 yuan, the model they claimed had "noise" problems, to the crossroads of Taiping North Road and Zhongshan East Road in Nanjing. They put up slogans reading "Shuangling Air-conditioners, Low Quality" and proceeded to smash up the air conditioner with hammers.

The demonstration drew quite a crowd and the local press also showed up. The next day, many of the local newspapers covered the event.

On March 28 and May 13, two more air-conditioning units were smashed in Shanghai and Nanjing in the same manner, "the purpose being to damage the reputation of the manufacturer," according to the prosecutor.

In addition to the three men from the hotel, Qian Guangru, a former reporter for *Nanjing Morning Post* was accused of accepting a payment of 12,000 yuan from Chen to help publicize his case and organize the smashing up of the air-conditioners. He also set up media interviews and published two articles on Shuangling air-conditioners' quality problems.

However, after being sampled and tested by Shanghai Product Quality Supervision Test Center, National Home Appliances Quality Supervision Center, the hotel's batch of air-conditioners were found to be in line with national standards. The incident caused losses of about 600,000 yuan for Shuanling, as a number of distributors and customers returned their units to the company after hearing about it.

The prosecutor said the four men "fabricated the facts and spread false information, thus damaging the company's reputation and causing significant losses to the company."

Who is right?

Beijing Today approached Zhang Qin, defense lawyer for Chen En, the main defendant, and Gong Jianhang, Vice General Manager of Shuangling Air-conditioners for their comments on this case.

Regarding the air-conditioners' quality, Zhang quoted Xue Qihua, director of the after-sales department of the manufactur-

If it's Broke, Smash it!

er. "In November 2001, the manufacturer, based on their on-site inspection, confirmed that the noise of eight air-conditioners was too loud. In six cases this was due to the improper installation and in the other two it was because of faulty machines."

Zhang pointed out that all the air-conditioners were installed by Guangyuan, the manufacturer's distributor. "The dispute surrounding the product quality went on for four months before the units were smashed. That there was a reasonable dispute between the defendants, manufacturers and distributors is a fact, not a fabricated story," said Zhang. He said the distributor Guangyuan agreed to drop the outstanding 170,000 yuan because of the quality problem.

Gong, the vice general manager of Shuangling, refused to provide details of the number of customers' complaints about the quality of their products since the foundation of the company four years ago. He said, "As far as

I can remember, there have been no serious complaints about our products' quality, especially for a whole batch. In a batch, one or two machines might have some problems."

Gong insisted that product quality was not a problem. Tests done by the inspection authorities were all positive. "They refused to pay the outstanding money not because of quality problems. When Guangyuan came to their door to collect money, they came up with the excuse that the products had quality problems."

But Zhang raised doubts about the test results. He said the two sampled air-conditioners could not reflect the quality of the air-conditioners purchased by the hotel. "Why didn't they test the eight air-conditioners that were problematic? What's the real reason for the noise? The question whether the products have quality problems remains unanswered."

Gong said Chen and his party came to them requesting about two million yuan as compensation. "They said if we didn't

"In China, the relationship between consumers and businesses is always tense. Large companies pay much attention to consumers' views. But medium or small sized companies are less responsive to consumers' complaints," said Qu Qianjiu, legal professor at China University of Politics and Law.

pay up, they would smash the air-conditioners."

Zhang admits it was wrong to smash up the air-conditioners but he insists it wasn't a publicity stunt to extract money from Shuanling. "Smashing the air-conditioners was definitely wrong," said Zhang. "But making a mistake is not the same as committing a crime. The defendants filed complaints with the relevant authorities but the problem was not solved. They got angry. They wanted to vent their anger and get the attention of the authorities. So they smashed the air-conditioners."

Zhang said Chen published a statement in a local newspaper named *Fuwu Daobao* (*Service Guide*) on March 16, 2001, the day after the Consumer's Day. In the statement, Chen wrote that he hated inferior products and that he wanted an apology rather than cash from the manufacturer. "I don't want a penny," he wrote.

How to protect both sides' interests?

"When consumers' rights are infringed, it is the consumer's right and duty to report it to the media," Zhang said. "In China, consumers are always in the weaker position."

But the manufacturer does not agree. "It is not easy for us to build our brand name. But many people do not know the truth. They don't know these people were just blackmailing us," Gong said. "For us, it is our duty to provide quality products to our customers. We have implemented a set of management measures in line with ISO 9000 quality regulations."

In recent years, smashing dodgy products has become something of a trend among irate consumers in China, the classic case being the smashing of a Benz automobile just over a year ago.

On December 26, 2001, a Benz SLK 230 owned by Wuhan

Wild Life Zoo was pulled by an ox into the streets and then smashed with hammers in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province. About three months later, the same thing happened to a Benz S320 in the same city. In the end, though Mercedes-Benz had denied there were any problems with the cars, the company agreed to perform a thorough clean of the Benz automobiles' fuel system for free.

"Smashing up products is wrong," said Qu Xinjiu, legal professor from China University of Politics and Law. Qu said the Benz incident reflects the good crisis management of Mercedes-Benz who reached a peaceful settlement instead of going to court.

As for the air-conditioner case, Qu said that verification of products' quality is down to judicial organs, not media reports or public opinions.

"It is a credibility problem. In China, the relationship between consumers and businesses is always tense. Large companies pay much attention to consumers' views. But medium or small sized companies are less responsive to consumers' complaints," said Qu.

He said in the past ten years or so the nation's legal system had developed to protect consumers' interests. The key lies in the execution of relevant laws and regulations. The government is taking a lesser role, so that the businesses' self-discipline regulations can take effect. The transition is a slow and difficult one.

"This trend of smashing products is sure to last for some time. But gradually, better solutions will emerge," said Qu. "Both consumers and businesses will be able to do things legally and observe credibility principles. They'll be responsible for their actions."

By Lily Li

In her Wufu Tea House (Beijing Theatre Branch), Tan Bo throws herself into a large chair and ponders why she got into the tea business.

"I like making my living from tea, it makes me feel like I'm in heaven." Though she's busier with her business than most of her friends ever thought she would be, she still finds time to sip tea, stare off into the distance and wonder what it's all about.

Six years ago, Tan Bo's title on her business card was just "tea lover". Now her card reads: President of Wu Fu Teahouse, Associate Director of China International Tea Culture Research Institute, Vice Secretary of Tea Industry Development Institute, writer of the book *Tea Artist*, a member of the China Tea Association and a member of China Businesswomen's Association.

"I don't care much about my titles, but I have to put them on my card, because now I not only belong to myself but also the teahouse."

What's the big deal about tea?

Tan Bo has always drunk tea virtually every day but not until eight years ago when she was 24 did she really think about appreciating it. It was an encounter with friends from Taiwan that opened her eyes. "I was surprised to see what an elaborate set my friends had brought over from Taiwan just for making tea."

Tan Bo's friends didn't explain anything, but just handed her a cup of tea. "You can't imagine what a sweet smell and flavor the tea had! I was totally amazed."

"Tea is the most common drink in China, but I reckon most people don't really know how to make and taste it. It seemed a pity to me. I decided I should show others how to drink tea and spread this happiness." Tan Bo opened her first teahouse in Di'anmen in August 1994. It was the first of its kind in Beijing, in that it aimed up-market.

Tan Bo advanced the concept of "tea art" when she opened the teahouse. She wanted to challenge the traditional bracketing of "firewood, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar and tea". Rather than seeing it as a basic commodity of life, she wanted her customers to put it up there with "music, chess, handwriting, drawing and art" as one of the more refined elements of Chinese culture.

There also appeared to be a gap in the market. "In 1994, there were few bars or coffee rooms, and no proper teahouses. There was nowhere for businessmen to find a quiet place to chat and bargain. My instinct told me there was a large teahouse market waiting for someone to dig it out."

It was to take a lot of digging. To traditional eyes, teahouses should be cheap places for satisfying the thirst, and it used to be possible to pay little for a large cup of tea. "I remember the early days of my teahouse. Many old people rushed in with vegetable baskets in their arms, just wishing to satisfy their thirst." This wasn't

The Tao of Tea



the kind of teahouse Tan Bo was aiming for.

No one could understand why the prices were so high and business was slow at first. The teahouse lost money for a long time and many of Tan Bo's friends advised her to give up. "We were in a difficult position. Though others might have given up after half a year, I kept on."

Her tenacity paid off. There are now ten teahouses in the Wu Fu chain in Beijing and a tealeaf company was set up to deal with the import of special Tanwan Wulong tealeaves.

"It was a cruel beginning, but I made it," she says with a big smile. "We were the forerunners, and fortunately we didn't become martyrs."

Life changing

Tea totally changed Tan Bo's life. Going to the disco used to be her main passion but tea has become a way of life. Tan Bo feels getting into tea culture helps her discover the quiet and gentle, more feminine side of her character. "Making tea is a simple process, but it's also elegant."

"I just wanted to set up a tea house people knew or had read about but had never seen, a teahouse people would really like to see, something

really out there and surprising, but something which also makes sense."

"I knew little about tea at first and all my knowledge of it has been collected as I discussed, negotiated and even argued with other tea businessmen. I don't want to cater just to experts and connoisseurs but to ordinary customers."

Priorities

Somewhat surprisingly for a successful businesswoman, who is known as "Lord of tea" by her employees and friends, Tan Bo longs for a more domestic existence. The advantage of being a woman, she says, is that "a woman can marry someone with prospects. Then, instead of being independent and the breadwinner, she can sit at home, without worrying about paying for the house and car."

"Family life is always more important for women than anything else," she says. "Why should someone want to be the richest person in the world?"

She said it was four years ago when she spent a year living in England that she really began to realize that she wanted more from life than money. "I was quite moved by my English friends. Maybe they were working hard to earn money but they weren't stingy and always helped the poor. My friends told me the happiness you get when you can give others in life beats anything you can get from work."

This doesn't mean that she's slackening off on the day job, though. Tan Bo's next plan is to create a world-famous tea brand. Unlike existing tea drink brands, this one will be more authentic and up-market. "I plan to do it in the next ten years. It will remind everybody of how Chinese tea should taste," she says.

In between her various projects, Tan Bo has also found time to hold classes in various aspects of tea culture. "I have had nearly 3000 students, many of whom are now regulars at my teahouse."

Balancing everything, that's the key. Jing Qi, a manager of one of the teahouses, says Tan Bo combines tradition and fashion as well as art and business. "She reminds me of Zhang Sanfeng, who created shadowboxing. She's always calm."

Tan Bo wants her customers to regard tea alongside music, chess, drawing and art as one of the more refined elements of Chinese culture.

Photo by Wang Wei



Liulichang Renovation Begins



The Cathay Bookstore now you see it...

Photo by Miao Yajie

By Iris Miao

拆 The Chinese character meaning “condemned” has appeared on the walls of the buildings along the northern section of Nanxinhua Jie. From the Quanjude Roast Duck Restaurant at Hepingmen to the white marble footbridge connecting the eastern and western sides of Liulichang, the ubiquitous character, pronounced *chai*, marks the beginning of the first stage of the Liulichang renovation project.

The first stage, scheduled to take two and a half years, will include the widening of Nanxinhua Jie, the main north-south street, the construction of eight groups of buildings modeled on the architectural style of the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China period, and the building of three public squares. The three-stage project, costing an estimated 10 billion yuan, is to be completed before the 2008 Olympic Games.

“The Liulichang Cultural Area will be a center of culture-related industries, a tourist site with the essence of old Beijing,” says Yang Yucheng, general manager of Jingdu Cultural Investment, the developer of the project.

What's new

Liulichang Cultural Area extends from Yanshou Jie and Yanzhi Hutong in the east, to Dongchunshu Hutong in the west, from Guang'an Avenue in the south, and Qianmen Xidajie in the north. The decision to redesign and clean up the area was made at the end of 2000, and the municipal government approved the final renovation plan last September.

Nanxinhua Jie is to be widened from the present 12 meters to 34 meters, with electrical and phone cables being laid underground. Three public squares — Wudaomiao Temple Square, Dongliulichang Square, and Changdongmen

Square, all with green areas and underground parking lots, will be constructed at the southeast corner of Nanxinhua Jie, the west entrance of East Liulichang Street, and the east end of the east Liulichang Street respectively. During this stage, the old Beijing Normal University classroom building, library, and dormitory; Lü Zhu Ci (Lü Dongbin Temple), Huoshen Miao (the God of Fire Temple), and the site of the Jinghua Publishing Company at the south-west corner of Nanxinhua Jie, will all be repaired or reconstructed.

Last year's unveiling of the renovation plans put an end to rumors that the entire Liulichang Street would be completely rebuilt. The shops will remain intact, with only necessary repairs being carried out, the concrete street surface will be replaced with granite, and the lighting will be upgraded.

The east and west streets and the shops that line them were built in the early 1980s. Shop names such as *Suiya Zhai* and *Baogu Zhai*, are cultural symbols of old Beijing. “Liulichang Street is one of the 25 protected areas of Beijing, and it will be well protected,” says Yang.

Culture and commerce

The eight new buildings along Nanxinhua Jie will vary in height, averaging five to six stories, basically not exceeding the height of the Quanjude Roast Dusk Restaurant. Parking lots will be constructed underneath each. Exactly how these buildings will be utilized in the future has not yet been determined, but it is envisaged they will be used in a way that fits in with cultural orientation of the Liulichang area.

“The renovation project is not invested by the government, it is operated commercially,” says Yang, “thus the eight structures will help

not only collect capital, but also make profit.”

As their will be a temple fair at Liulichang during the coming Spring Festival, the demolition of the buildings in the area is to be divided into two stages, the focus this month being on ensuring they are vacated. The bulldozers will arrive in the area after the Festival.

For the greater good ...

Those most adversely affected by the renovations are the many barbeque restaurants along Nanxinhua Jie, including the popular Korean *Sanqianli*, and numerous shops selling music instruments.

The first Sanqianli was established in the area in the 1980s, but now the smoke from the barbeque is just a memory. The restaurant has already been stripped.

“Though competition is fierce here, my shop was always busy,” says owner Cui Daxin, “I’m not giving up the market here.” Cui has already earmarked a new location, just behind his old restaurant, a little further down the street.

In the past five or six years, Nanxinhua Jie has become a center for musical instrument stores. Though the “chai” character has not yet appeared on the walls of these stores, their days are numbered.

“It’s hard to say whether we can come back or not after the renovation,” says Wang Dongsen of Xinhua Tianyun Musical Instruments, “since we don’t have any other choices, we’ll have to wait and see.”

Cathay Bookstore, the first and largest antiquarian bookstore in the People’s Republic of China, also has to move. In the past fifty years, the shop has become an essential part of the street’s character. “We are not moving out of the area,” says Han Zhen from the bookstore, “but the new location has not yet been settle on.”



Xinjiang Relics Evoke Allure of Ancient Silk Road

By Iris Miao

Ancient Silk Road — an Exhibition of Cultural Relics from Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region opened at the National Museum of Chinese History on Wednesday.

The exhibition, one of the highlights of the museum’s frontier culture series, displays 154 pieces of gold and silver, silk, hangings and carved articles from the 9th and 10th century, most of which are recent archaeological discoveries, and many of which are being exhibited outside Xinjiang for the first time.

Among the most attractive pieces on show are a set of prairie stone figures. Carved in granite, prairie stone figures are typical relics left by nomads of the Asian-European grassland. These figures were generally placed in front of graves, facing east, either alone or in groups. Most of the figures are warriors, however, recently 14 stone figures were found in Bu'erjin County, in the Altai region of northern Xinjiang, among which are the only two with female features found in recent years. Their faces are oval-shaped, with straight, high noses.

Also of note are dried remains of three humans unearthed at Qiemo, on the southern edge of the Taklimakan Desert, believed to be around 3,000 years old. Xinjiang, with its bone-dry climate, is renowned for the way ancient corpses tend to turn up, almost miraculously preserved. The three on display at the exhibition are of two male adults and an infant.

During the late 19th century and the early 20th century, numerous western explorers and archaeologists visited Xinjiang. Chinese scholars began their archaeological exploration from the 1930s, and numerous ancient relic sites and tombs have been unearthed along the Silk Road since the 1950s. The 145 selected pieces are among the most representative artifacts of Silk Road culture.

Where: National Museum of Chinese History
(East side of Tian'anmen Square)

When: till April 15.



Photos by Lou Qiyong

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By Yu Shanshan

After decades of decline, illustration is an art form in growing demand and exploration in China. At the forefront of this rebirth is the Ivory Black Illustration Studio, a group of artists dedicated to preserving and developing what used to be a major field of popular art.

The legacy

The studio is made up of five graduates of the engraving and Chinese painting departments of the Central Academy of Fine Arts: Lao Jiang (Jiang Jianqiu), Li Yue, Wang Dan, Song Xing, and Jiang Shan. They started the studio as a way to collectively pursue a shared interest in illustration.

"For almost ten years, the poor quality of published illustrations brought the art form a bad name. I think maybe our connection can help bring a new look to the field," Lao Jiang said in an interview with *City Pictorial* magazine.

Today's illustrators are working in a time very different from the golden age of illustration in China before the 1990s, when *lianhuanhua* and *xiaorens-hu*, small illustration-driven books, were widely popular. Before the rise of photography, there was a whole community of illustrators busily creating works for books, newspaper and magazines.

Dai Dunbang's illustrations for *The Dream of the Red Mansion*, published in the 1970s, is now considered a seminal work. "Dai's book is undoubtedly a classic of Chinese illustration - it is a great piece of art," said Song Xing.

The members of the studio hope to make their own addition to this tradition and harness increasing interest from newspapers and magazines. According to Lao Jiang, "Characterized illustrations can help magazines define who they are and their style. Striking illustrations can draw customers to magazines they would otherwise ignore."



The five members of the Ivory Black Illustration Studio (left to right): Li Yue, Lao Jiang, Wang Dan, Song Xing, and Jiang Shan



Illustrations by (left to right): Wang Dan, Jiang Shan, Lao Jiang, and Song Xing

Breathing New Life into Illustration



Illustration by Li Yue

Not enough to live on

Founded in June 2001, members of the studio have done work for many clients, mostly magazines, like *City Pictorial*, *New Modern Pictorial*, *Lifeweek*, *China Newsweek*, *Book City*, and newspapers including *Southern Weekend*.

However, all five maintain full-time

jobs outside the studio because they still receive too few commissions to actually make a living on drawing alone. In fact, Wang Dan is the only one of the five that hopes to be a professional illustrator.

Compared to photography, which is now preferred by publishers and the media, illustrations are mostly looked at

as small decorations, according to Jiang Shan, who works as a magazine designer. As a result, many prospective illustrators have followed career paths in related fields such as advertising, cartooning, photography and packaging design. "For us, illustration is more like an interest than a career," said Lao Jiang, who makes a living creating flash animations for websites and advertising firms.

Though demand for their art is relatively low, the members of this studio maintain their own standards for work. "We don't just take any project that comes our way," Wang Dan said.

In one example, Wang Dan was asked this month to do an illustration for a magazine story. The client told Wang exactly what to do, including general composition, what the figure should look like and its precise pose. Wang said, "I asked the person, 'why don't you just do this yourself if you have such a clear picture in your mind?'"

Creating new worlds

"In this age of high-powered imagery, illustrations can do things that photography cannot. For example, illustrations can create a surrealistic, dream-like vibe at a low cost, and magazines like that," said Mo Xiaodan, who used to provide illustrations for magazines in Guangzhou. Unlike their predecessors, who pursued a realistic style, the Ivory Blacks and other young illustrators are striving to create more challenging works that still support text but can also stand on their own as works of imagination.

Computers have made the task of producing illustrations far more efficiently. Software such as Photoshop, Painter and Flash are common tools used by studio members to create fantastic, even 3-D, images. However, as they embrace technology, these artists try to make sure their works show a delicate marriage of hand and machine. As Lao Jiang said, "No computer can give you that hand-drawn feel."

Background**A Brief History of Chinese Illustration**

Illustration is an art form that dates all the way back to the ninth century in China and had a prominent position among the arts beginning in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). In different styles, illustrations were crucial

parts of popular books published during the Ming and Qing eras.

In the early twentieth century, comics and small illustration-driven books called *xiaorens-hu* bloomed quickly and established a firm place in popular culture

and political criticism.

Xiaorens-hu were targeted at the lower-class masses, so smash hits enjoyed massive sales. For example, the *xiaorens-hu* version of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* first published in 1956 went on to sell more than 100 million copies.

Entering the 1990s, illustration lost favor with publishers

and media executives, prominent illustrators stopped painting for books because of the paltry paychecks, and the news media concentrated on promoting photography. This led to the creation of fewer and poorer-quality works — it was undoubtedly the low point for illustration in China.

In the late 1990, some mod-

ern fashion and news magazines rediscovered the unique strengths of illustration and invited artists to create works for their publications. Though it is an old art form, illustration has not been left behind in the technology explosion of this century — in fact, most illustrators working today use computers to create digital products.

Breaking Tradition: Neo Beijing Opera

By Dong Nan

Beijing Opera, branded a stagnant art form by some critics, has found new life. Gone are the simple sets, familiar music and standardized movements. Most fans of the art form rejoiced, though some recoiled, at performances of the neo-Beijing Opera *Wu Zetian*, which uses high-tech lighting effects, an electronic orchestra and a group of vigorous accompanying dancers held at the Changan Grand Theatre January 10 to 12. This innovative work, and others like it staged in the past year or so, have aroused concern about the current status of Beijing Opera and its prospects in the future.

"Beijing Opera has to keep up with the times like other art forms. That is what it takes to make it in the market, which is the breeding grounds and catalyst for change in the arts," said Wu Rujun, 37, general designer of the opera who also plays a leading role.

He added that *Wu Zetian* is an unparalleled endeavor. "We refreshed the traditional, unchanged style of music for voice, incorporating influences from diverse musical forms, including Kunqu Opera, folk songs and western musicals. We even wrote theme music for the female protagonist, something unthinkable in traditional Beijing Opera."

The additional of the group of dancers, which performed around main characters as they sang, was an almost unprecedented move, according to Wu. He said their movements added to overall the performance by representing characters' inner feelings.

According to Huo Dashou, deputy director of Art Committee, Chinese Drama Institute, "A good Neo-Beijing Opera should have a modern sense with a rooting in tradition. At the same time, it should use a form that communicates with people today."

Regarding Wu Rujun's new work specifically, Huo said, "I think *Wu Zetian* covered these basic points, and its eclectic style could become mainstream in the future development of Beijing Opera."

However, not everyone is embracing the changes to Beijing Opera as embodied by *Wu Zetian*. Jiang Zhitao, 50, deputy editor in chief of *Chinese Theater Magazine*, believes Wu Rujun went too far in the new opera. "Wu attaches too much importance to innovation of form and has overlooked content," he said.

"The reform of Beijing Opera is an ongoing process and today no one is sure about the best direction in which to go. *Wu Zetian* is but one attempt, and we have been prepared to get all kinds of praise and criticism," said Si Xin, executive director of the opera.

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加裕华装饰

Barber Gets Cut

By Dong Nan

Production has stalled on the filming of *The Barber*, according to star of the movie Jiang Wen, in an announcement published in *Beijing Youth Daily* Sunday. Jiang clarified the "postponement" of the movie and his disagreement with director Chen Yifei. Chen issued a response to Jiang's statement the following day.

"It is common for disputes to arise among a cast and crew, or quarrels over an excellent work," said Jiang, "I just tried my best to eliminate all the problems that might encumber the production of a wonderful movie. Inevitably, every one of us would have a



Chen Yifei VS Jiang Wen

sense of impatience during the course. It is not anyone's fault, not to mention the problem of who should apologize." He added his only hope is to resume filming as soon as possible.

"I don't know Jiang Wen's real

purpose," responded Chen Yifei. "The production delay of *The Barber* is the decision of the four investors, not me. The disagreement between Jiang Wen and I is not simply over different ideals of art. It is to do with financial and personal issues."

Shooting began on *The Barber* in November last year. Starring two top box office draws, Jiang Wen and Ge You, fans had high expectations of the film. However production was halted without explanation at the end of December. Rumors quickly spread that the cause of the delay was a breakdown in relations between Jiang Wen and Chen Yifei.

Background:

Jiang Wen, an actor and director, was born in 1963. Jiang rose to fame for his starring role in *Red Sorghum*, directed by Zhang Yimou (1987). His film *Devils on the Doorstep*, which he directed and starred in, won the Grand Prix at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival.

Chen Yifei is known as a successful oil painter, costume designer and a magazine publisher. His oil painting works, such as *Xun Yang Yi Yun*, were highly praised domestic and abroad.

New Take on an Old Story

By Wang Chunzhu

Works by celebrated Chinese dramatist Cao Yu have become a popular source of inspiration for new productions. Cao's drama *Sunrise* was adapted into a musical, which premiered in Beijing earlier this month. *The Formula of Thunderstorm*, by renowned Hong Kong screenwriter Chen Ganquan, is a new play based on Cao's *Thunderstorm* and was staged last week at China Children's Theatre.

The original production of *Thunderstorm* in 1933 created a controversy with its account of greed, crime and incest within an old Chinese family. *The Formula of Thunderstorm* retells the old story from a new perspective: In order to prove himself to his wife, a playwright decides to adapt *Thunderstorm* into a new stage drama. As he labors over the new play, he realizes that the conflicts he imagines in the old family are reflections of the real world troubles of his own. Trapped in the illusions created by his own writing, he feels totally lost.

Finally he follows his wife's advice and steps out of his confined study. He sees then how foolish he has been to ignore the brilliant sunshine in the real world.

The Formula of Thunderstorm is a graduation work by senior students from the Department of Performing Arts of the Beijing Film Academy. Director Chen Bing told *Beijing Today* that choosing a play was a big headache for him. "Finally I got this one," he said, "because it provided a diversified space for us."



A quarrel in the old family

Classic Opera Brings the House Down



Photo provided by China Performing Arts Agency

By Wang Chunzhu

The love story between Violetta and Alfredo in *La Traviata* is one of the great classics of opera. Last Friday night, performers from Beijing's Central Opera House gave their interpretation of Giuseppe Verdi's masterpiece at Tianqiao Theatre.

Clearly familiar with the plot, the audience quickly

warmed to the production. The response climaxed with the last scene of the opera, as the lovers ecstatically plan to leave Paris forever. Alfredo, played by tenor Wang Feng, enters with the doctor before Violetta, played by soprano Yao Hong, is seized with a last resurgence of strength. Feeling life return, she staggers and falls dead at her lover's feet. The applause

for the final aria *Parigi, o cara*, was deafening.

"It was really a challenge for Yao Hong because no other opera has so many arias," said director Li Dandan, "but she managed to do it."

The Central Opera House will stage another classic opera, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* from this Saturday at Tianqiao Theatre.

Pop Goes the Zheng



Wang Yong and his zheng

By Wang Chunzhu

Rock musician and zheng player Wang Yong will perform a concert of pop music with his band at Century Theatre at the end of January.

"There are many traditional instruments in China besides the zheng," Wang says, "in conjunction with 'foreign' instruments, I have long believed we could take our Chinese music forward in a brand new form. And my success has proved I was right."

His first taste of success came when the Wang Yong Group performed as part of the Asia-Pacific Art Week in

Berlin in September 2001. The concert *Dream-Traveling*, in Beijing last June, affirmed the victory of the pioneer. "Their performance reaches into your soul," commented DJ Zhu Yun from Beijing Music Radio.

The coming concert, titled *Wang Yong Cross-Over Music*, is a source of high expectations for fans of the group, which includes top Chinese musicians from different backgrounds. As well as the zheng, a traditional Chinese instrument, featured instruments include the guitar, bass, lute and drums.

WORLDWIDE



Rapper Eminem

American Music Awards Winners Notable by Absence

Rapper Eminem swept the American Music Awards Monday, but he was one of several key winners who did not appear at the event.

Eminem won in every category in which he was nominated, for favorite hip-hop and pop-rock male artist and favorite hip-hop and pop-rock album.

Other no-shows included country trio the Dixie Chicks and rock band Creed, who each won two prizes. (Reuters)



Nicole Kidman stands next to newly unveiled star.

Nicole Kidman Gets Hollywood Walk of Fame Star

Actress Nicole Kidman on Monday declared herself "thrilled" to be the newest star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, adding that she doesn't care if "people walk all over me for the rest of my life."

The Golden Globe-winning actress claimed the 2,211th star on the fabled sidewalk beside the Kodak Theater, home to the Academy Awards, with a whispered "Wow!"

Dressed in a black knit suit and spiked heels, the flame-haired Australian-raised actress attended the dedication ceremony with a gaggle of executives from Paramount Studios, which produced her latest film, *The Hours*. (Reuters)

CBS Drama Touched by an Angel Ending

This season will be the last

for CBS' popular drama *Touched by an Angel*, the series' executive producer said Monday.

Martha Williamson, who said she is developing a new series for the network, struck a philosophical tone about the show's end and called its nine-year run "remarkable."

"Who wouldn't like to see their show go on ... but I think the time is right," she said, adding, "God's timing is perfect." (AP)

Greek Wedding Star Talks About TV Show

The hit film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* will get a modern-day makeover when it's transformed into a television series, its star and creator, Nia Vardalos, said Monday.



John Corbett and Nia Vardalos in My Big Fat Greek Wedding

The movie, which received a Golden Globe nomination, is the basis of the CBS series *My Big Fat Greek Life*, debuting next month. (AP)

Julie Andrews takes on theater directing

"I'm going places I never thought I'd go," Julie Andrews says as she prepares to return to the stage — as a director.

The play is *The Boy Friend*, which brought her, at the age of 19, to Broadway from London. "It was the turning point in my career," Julie says.

And now at 67, she will direct the musical comedy at the Bay Street Theater in Sag Harbor, New York, bowing August 5 and, she hopes, making it way back to Broadway. The entire production is sponsored by Target Stores.

She admits, "I'm awed" at the thought of directing, adding, "but I'm in friendly hands — it's a big family thing." (Variety)



Julie Andrews

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A sheepish gift, 2,080 yuan

Etched in Stone

By Salinda

Austria-based Swarovski has become a major mover of crystal in Beijing over the past several years. Its products are available in more than ten specialty stores and at counters in major malls such as the Lufthansa shopping center, China World Trade Center, Parkson department store

and Shuang'an Center.

Swarovski specializes in incised crystal stone and semi-finished crystal, both of which are imitation crystal forms good for making jewelry, lamps and decorations for clothes.

The largest, most complete and most luxurious Swarovski shop is located on the first floor of Oriental Plaza. The store is stocked with over one hundred pieces of jewelry and decorations shaped as people, flowers, animals and other designs.



"Antonio", 3,600 yuan

This year, as part of the Swarovski Collectors Society 2003 Annual Edition, the second piece in the "Magic of Dance" trilogy of figures, dubbed "Antonio", was created. The dramatic sculpture of a flaming Flamenco performer uses sweeping lines and precision cuts to embody the passion and elegance of Latin dance. Attention has been paid even to such details as the man's face and a red band at the

base of his hat. This unusual crystal artwork is priced at 3,600 yuan.

Swarovski offers special products for the China market in the form of images representing the animals of the Chinese zodiac. Last year, the company released crystal rat, ox, horse, sheep, pig and monkey figures. In time for Spring Festival, the company has created a crystal ibex priced at 2,080 yuan to welcome the year of the sheep.

Where: AA55B, level 1, Oriental Plaza, Wangfujing, Dongcheng District **Open:** 9:30 am - 9:30 pm **Tel:** 8518 6790



Crystal Galore

By Salinda

The fifth floor of the Lufthansa Shopping Center is home to the Zhengtong gift company, a retailer that specializes in high-end goods made of materials such as crystal, glass and ceramics. The store's crystal

goods come from two major brands, Royal de Champagne and Marcolin, and the majority are small home decorations.

Royal de Champagne, a French crystal cutter, has been churning out precision-cut works for more than 300 years. The Italian company Marcolin produces crystal pieces mixed with colored metals, including gold, silver and copper. Some of them contain pure 24k gold. Among the company's works are a full-sized crystal sword, dagger and knife, which fetch several thousand yuan each.

Where: fifth floor of Lufthansa Shopping Center, Chaoyang District **Open:** 9 am - 9 pm **Tel:** 6465 1188



Baccarat's 73,250 yuan Celemine vase weighs in at a hefty 22 kilograms

Scratch My Baccarat

By Yu Yang

By granting a license to build a glass factory in a small town in 1764, the French king Louis XV endorsed the creation of what has become a world famous brand of crystal goods - Baccarat.

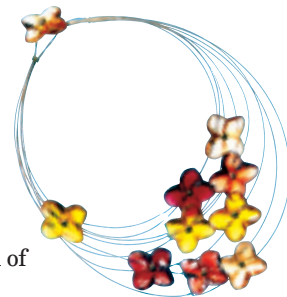
In 1995, the company opened its first crystal store in Beijing among the high-end shops in the Palace Hotel. The shop offers a wide range of crystal choices, such as vases, wine vessels and jewelry, in styles that cover the classic and the cutting-edge. Prices vary, but with its quality and reputation, Baccarat crystal never comes cheap.

Two months ago, a second Baccarat store, offering superior décor to the Palace Hotel outlet, opened in the China World Trade Center.

One of Baccarat's main product lines is crystal vases. The 22 kilogram Celemine vase is covered in an intricate diamond-carved pattern. Another interesting vase stands out because of bright red highlights added to the inside of its clear body.

Among the store's more popular products are crystal creations shaped like cartoon images. This year, a new cartoon-inspired offering is a figurine of a sitting, waving Snoopy that fetches 1,690 yuan.

Where: L118, China World Trade Center, Chaoyang District **Open:** 9:30 am - 9 pm **Tel:** 6505 4989



Snoopy

High-Class Glass

In the West, in the form of vases, glasses and much more, crystal has long been a symbol of elegance and considered a tasteful gift. However, because it is not a traditional Chinese product, crystal can prove a little tricky to track down in the capital. Below we have listed some places to pick up top-quality crystal goods to decorate the home or to give to friends and family for Spring Festival.

Getting Crystal Clear

Making sure you get the highest quality crystal can be a less-than-transparent matter. When shopping for crystal pieces, keeping the "4Ps" in mind can help ensure you make a smart purchase.

1. Purity: Good crystal is completely pure without impurities, air bubbles or striations. It can refract light into a seven-colored spectrum.

2. Precision: The more even-

ly cuts are made, the brighter the crystal will reflect light.

3. Polishing: Cuts sides of good crystal are smooth and nick-free.

4. PbO (lead oxide): Good crystal should contain at least 30% lead oxide, making it easy to cut.

Ask your crystal dealer for details about the quality of their pieces to make sure you are buying the best.



Two-tone wine service, 3,000 yuan

Not So Bohemian

By Yu Yang

In the 16th century, Bohemia became the center of crystal artwork in Europe. In the centuries since, that tradition has been upheld, today in the form of Bohemia brand crystal.

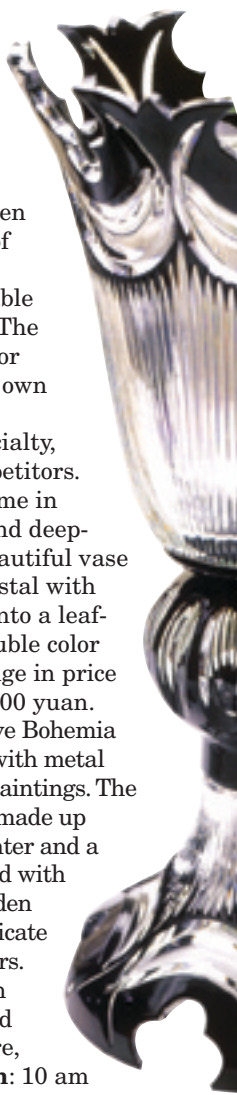
Bohemia crystal has been available in Beijing for more than ten years. The company's products are sold in major shops around the city, including its own specialty store in COFCO plaza.

Two-tone pieces, a Bohemia specialty, stand out among their crystal competitors. Vases, fruit bowls and decanters come in this striking style, in which clear and deep-colored crystal is combined. One beautiful vase is crafted of mostly deep purple crystal with clear highlights, its mouth carved into a leaf-like pattern. Depending on size, double color

crystal items range in price from 2,000 to 3,000 yuan.

Other attractive Bohemia works are inlaid with metal or feature small paintings. The pieces in one set, made up of glasses, a decanter and a vase, are all ringed with wide bands of golden metal bearing delicate paintings of flowers.

Where: fourth floor of One World Department Store, Dongcheng **Open:** 10 am - 9:30 pm **Tel:** 6528 5954



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By Wenlong

Just like the land of this country, the cuisine of China covers a huge spectrum, offering a bit of something for everyone. Regional foods differ according to climate, ingredients, cooking style and life style. Among this range, imperial cuisine and the dishes enjoyed by official families have always been the most extravagant, making use of the greatest range of ingredients, since price was no limit. Such cuisine also offers unparalleled attention to presentation, service and overall aesthetics. Beijing, with its history as the seat of power and the home to officials, has long been the center for imperial cuisine in China.

In general, official family-style dishes were a bit inferior to those served to the emperor himself, and because many officials moved to Beijing from other areas to serve in the government, their foods carried to show.

Today, several restaurants around town offer the kinds of foods enjoyable only to nobility in the past. Of course, such luxury still has its price, but despite the steep bills at these restaurants, they keep the customers coming in.

Eating Like a King's Advisor

Braised shark fins
(huangmen yuchi)
at Beijing Hotel



Steamed abalone (jingpin baoyu)

Tan Family Dishes Restaurant

The Tan Family Dishes Restaurant, which resides on the seventh floor of the five-star Beijing Hotel, is seen by some as the king of official family style restaurants, a reputation at least upheld in its prices.

The Tan family rose to prosperity when Tan Zongjun won second place in the national imperial examinations in 1875 and was assigned to an influential position in Peking by the Tongzhi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty. Tan was a local of Guangdong Province, and because of his deep love of Cantonese food, he brought chefs expert in making seafood with him to the capital. Tan family cuisine, which has become a style all its own, remains best known for seafood, including such delicacies as abalone and shark fin, along with other pricey ingredients such as bird's nest.

The two chefs at the Tan Family Restaurant both have around 30 years of experience in cooking Tan family dishes. One of the touches that makes Tan family dishes special is the use of thick chicken broth. To accommodate today's more health-conscious diners, the restaurant's chefs have revised the broth recipe to filter out the fat, resulting in less greasy but no less delicious dishes.

The restaurant provides standard dining service in its main hall and set banquets in its nine private rooms. Banquet prices range from 300 yuan per person all the way up to 1,500 yuan per person, excluding drinks and service fee. Regardless, the restaurant's culinary excellence and stellar view over Beihai Park and the Forbidden City have made it a hit.

For Spring Festival, the restaurant is promoting a special banquet priced at 288 or 388 yuan per person that includes six specialties of the house, one soup, one cold starter and one plate of mixed fruits.

Add: No. 33 Dongchang'anjie, Dongcheng **Open:** 11:30 am – 2 pm, 6 pm – 10 pm **Tel:** 6513 7766 ext. 1389 **Average cost:** 300 yuan per person and up

Laijinyuxuan Restaurant: the Red Chamber Banquet

This restaurant draws on literary inspiration, as it specializes in dishes described in the classic Qing dynasty novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin. The kitchen also

cranks out excellent Sichuan and Guizhou food. Even the restaurant's name has literary roots, coming from an expression used by famed poets of the Tang Dynasty that means a place where new friends can get together.

After construction was completed in western Zhongshan Park in 1915, the building was first used as a teahouse. The restaurant came into being in the late 1980s.

The featured, well-studied Red Chamber banquets reflect the dietary



Assorted cold dishes (shijin pinpan)

habits and customs of the people of the late Ming and Qing dynasties. Laijinyuxuan has been recognized as a national first-grade restaurant, proving the excellence of its kitchen.

The restaurant is made up of a large main hall and four separate banquet rooms. All banquets are intended for ten diners and include ten main dishes, seven types of starchy staple foods and seven starters.



However, prices vary according to ingredient, going from 600 yuan to 5,000 yuan. Fragrant eggplant with assorted nuts (*gie xiang*, 60 yuan), is a signature dish among the restaurant's over 100 offerings. In the dish, diced eggplant is cooked with quail meat and 12 kinds of nuts. The attentive waitstaff is happy to give diners explanations of the origins of this dish and others from the famed novel.

Another selling point of this restaurant is its elegant courtyard that contains a classical-style fountain, bridges, a pond, and a red two-story building.

Add: West side of Zhongshan Park, No. 4 Zhonghua Lu, Dongcheng **Open:** 10:30 am – 10 pm **Tel:** 6605 6676 **Average cost:** 100 yuan per person and up

Li's Family Dishes Restaurant

This hard-to-find courtyard is too small to really qualify as a restaurant, though the Li family has served food to distinguished guests from more than 60 countries including Bill Gates and

president of IBM. A branch of the Li Family Restaurant has opened in Melbourne, Australia, and another in the making in Tokyo.

The founder of this tiny tribute to fine dining, Li Shanlin, 83, was a professor of applied mathematics before he retired. His grandfather was a second-level official in the Qing-era Ministry of Internal Affairs and his father a general in the Kuomintang, meaning he has the background to serve up authentic official family dishes.

Today, two of his daughters take care of the cooking. The restaurant does not offer a la carte dining - all customers must choose from a range of prix fixed banquets, served in one of five rooms, each containing a simple table and chairs. Simplicity, in fact, is a running theme, as tableware, decoration and even dish ingredients forgo extravagance for quality. "In this family, we cook dishes in strict accordance with the way we did



60 years ago," claims Professor Li, "and we never use MSG."

The banquets range in price from 200 yuan per person to 1,500 yuan, and can include such gourmet items as abalone, scallops, mandarin fish and lobsters. The restaurant has a rule that it exclusively serves dinner, a policy only broken to dish up lunch under serious political pressure. Also unlike most other restaurants, the Li Family Restaurant will close during Spring Festival. "We are common people and we need our rest," explains Li.



Traditional Chinese snacks

Add: No. 11 Yangfang Hutong, Denei Dajie, Xicheng **Open:** one dinner nightly starting 6 pm **Tel:** 6618 0107 **Average cost:** 200 yuan per person and up

Yuzhuantang Restaurant

A newcomer to the official family dining community, Yuzhuantang opened on an island in Qingnianhu Park in 2001. Its beautiful natural surroundings and comfortable interior have helped it become a favorite for highbrow dining.

The chef and manager of the restaurant is a previous employee of the Beijing Hotel's Tan Family Dishes Restaurant. Despite the top-quality of its cooking, the restaurant has an easy, comfortable feel, meaning diners do not have to go black tie to get star-rated food. However, because only the best ingredients are used, prices are still high, ranging from 200 to 2,000 yuan per person for a regal banquet.



Braised shark fins (huangmen yuchi)

The restaurant only serves banquets in its eight separate rooms, all of which have views of the park's quiet lake. Plus, it has a well-done English menu, making it easier for expats to order and know what they are eating. Yuzhuantang is a good choice for diners who want to taste authentic official family cooking without paying an absolute fortune.

Add: Eastern Qingnianhu Park, Anwai Dajie, Dongcheng **Open:** 9:30 am – 2 pm, 5 pm – 9 pm **Tel:** 6426 1867 **Average cost:** 200 yuan per person and up



Steamed white fungus with fruits (yin'er suhui)

Bai Family Restaurant

To get to this restaurant, located in a garden that is over 300 years old, customers are led down a long alley lined with red lanterns. The eatery itself, however, has only been operating for a year and a half. The surrounding garden's claim to fame is it was a former residence of Cao Xueqin, author of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. Surprisingly, however, the restaurant's owners offer nothing that connects the establishment with its legacy.

The garden was first part of the mansion of the Yue family, the founders of Tongrentang, a giant in the field of traditional Chinese medicine. After China Central Television aired a popular TV series about the lives of the Yues, under the pseudonym the Bai, in 2001, the restaurant's owner decided to change the establishment's name.

The restaurant's waitstaff dress in Qing Dynasty clothing, their outfits differing by role. They keep up their air of tradition by welcoming diners



Braised deer brain with fungus (bazhen lu'nao)

with deep bows or curtsies. The fare is mainly a combination of Tan Family cuisine and deer-based dishes.



Animal rights watchers, beware: the house specialty deer dishes can be a bit extreme on the eye and the wallet. One popular offering is braised deer brain with fungus (*bazhen lu'nao*), which goes for more than 1,000 yuan.



The restaurant will hold a lantern festival during Spring Festival, in which diners who guess the answers to riddles written on lanterns will receive gifts.



Stewed baby deer with ginseng (renshen quanluguo)

Add: No. 29 Suzhou Jie, Haidian **Open:** 11 am – 9:30 pm **Tel:** 6265 8851 **Average cost:** 150 yuan person and up

Photos by Lou Ge / Wang Yong

Beijing Gates: Memory and Reconstruction

The city gates of Beijing are long gone, yet remain part of present-day metropolitan life, as locals still refer to the general areas where the gates stood by their old names. There used to be 16 gates to the walls around the city, of which only Qianmen and Deshengmen still stand. Now Crystal Imaging has created virtual reproductions of the gates that have been pulled down. This show is accompanied by photographs of the gate sites by the artist Zeng Li, historic images borrowed from the Beijing Urban Construction Archives, as well as watercolor paintings by Zhang Xiande.

Where: Six Box, No. 2, 1 district Yuetan Beijie, Xicheng **When:** till

February 12, 10 am-6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6850 5272



Chongwenmen Watchtower

Movies

Pretty Big Feet

Directed by Yang Yazhou, starring Ni Ping, Shun Hanying, Yuan Qian and Xu Yajun. Zhang Meili is a common country teacher, her only really outstanding quality being her big feet. Xia Yu, a volunteer, comes to the little village from Beijing. She charms the children and villages with tales of the outside world, but eventually tires of the poverty and isolation of the village. Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, (east of the 21st Century Theater) Chaoyang **When:** January 17, 8 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan **Tel:** 6430 1398 **Email:** michael@cherrylanemovies.com.cn

Stealing Beauty

Liv Tyler plays an attractive young woman who arrives in Tuscany with a lot on her mind: her mother just committed suicide, she has not gotten over a boy she met four years before, and she has a sneaking suspicion that the pallid, emaciated neighbour next door is her father. Bertolucci scoured the land far and wide to find the perfect heroine for this philosophical tale and Tyler beautifully complements the golden light and Tuscan scenery. English with Chinese subtitles.

Where: Italian Embassy Cultural Office **When:** January 23, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187

Following

Directed by Christopher Nolan, starring Jeremy Theobald, Alex Haw and Lucy Russell. The story revolves around a man who wants to be a writer. In order to find inspiration, he follows a stranger on the street, but discovers a thief is after the same person. English with Chinese subtitles.

Where: Space for Imagination, 5 Xiwangzhuang Haidian **When:** January 18, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6279 1280



Xia Yu and her student

Lecture

Writing Spring Couplets and Making Chinese Auspicious Knots

Try your hand at writing *chun lian* before the Chinese New Year. *Chun lian*, poetic couplets written on red paper and pasted on the top or two sides of a door, is a centuries-old tradition for ordinary people to bring good wishes, as well as for shops and companies to have lucrative business in the coming year. There is also a chance to learn to make traditional red knot hangings.

Where: Beijing Friendship Association with Foreign Countries, Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** January 19, 2:30-4 pm **Admission:** adults 30 yuan, students 20 yuan, including materials **Tel:** 8851 4913

China Grottoes

Xu Zhiqiang, a research fellow at the China National Library, will lecture on the history of grottoes in China such as the Yungang Grottoes at Datong in Shanxi Province, Dunhuang Grottoes in Gansu Province, Longmen Grottoes at Luoyang in Henan Province and Dazuo Grottoes in Chongqing. In Chinese.

Where: China National Library, Zhongguancun Nandajie, Handian **When:** January 18, 9: 15-11:15 am **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8854 5593

Chinese Embroidery Course

Lessons on the art of Chinese embroidery meet every weekend, for a to-

tal of about 18 hours. Lessons can be conducted in English or Chinese.

Where: Beijing Sunny Wang Fashion Design Studio **When:** three weekend days from 10 am to 5 pm **Cost:** 900 yuan, include embroidery tools **Tel:** 13911 520083 **Email:** art8@sohu.com



Rose in embroidery

Sports

Easy Walking

This hike starts with a walk up a lane to a small village nestled in a valley. Then walk up over the hills to Stonewall Village. From here follow a secret way to reach a clear path in the pine woods. The hills here are rolling, dotted by one or two lonely shepherds wondering about. Walking along the ridge, one can take in a country view that stretches for miles. It is a walk that can be done by all, with lots to see and no problems with danger and slipping.

Where: Miyun, north east of Beijing **When:** January 19, 8:30 am outside Starbucks at the Lido Hotel, 9 am at Capital Paradise main gate, come back at 4:30-5 pm **Admission:** adults 150 yuan, children 100 yuan **Tel:** 13701 003694 **Email:** bjhikers@yahoo.co.uk

For Rent

In Liangma Apartments, in the back garden of the 21st Century Hotel, very close to Chaoyang park. Also near the embassy area, Great Wall Sheraton Hotel, Lufthansa Center and bar street. Two apartments: one is 196sqm, three bedrooms, two sitting rooms, two bathrooms, US \$2,000 a month; other 143sqm, two bedrooms, two sitting rooms, two bathrooms, US \$1,500 a month. Both are clean, in good condition, fully furnished with appliances. Contact 13501 187823

Stage

Pipe Pot

A performance of Quju, opera derived from ballad singing. Performed by the Beijing Quju Troupe.

Where: Chang'an Grand Theatre, 7 Jianguonei Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** January 17, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 60, 80, 180 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7750 ext 508

Discount

The Best Discount Shop contains clothes from over two hundred brands, such as Miss K, Benetton, Sisley, TB2, Egoll, Elle and Testing RO2, all at great discounts.

Where: Fifth floor of the Beijing Arts and Crafts Central Store, Wangfujing, Dongcheng **When:** till January 31 **Tel:** 6528 8866

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By Guo Yuandan

Parties

Ruin and More

Tonight, Ruin (*Feixu*) deals out psychedelic music; Tomorrow, Folk Music magazine will host an evening of unplugged tunes, a quiet alternative to this bar's usual fully-charged offerings.

Where: Get Lucky, 500 meters east of the south gate of University of International Business and Economics, Chaoyang **When:** January 17 and 18, 9 pm **Admission:** adults 30 yuan, students 20 yuan **Tel:** 6429 9109, 6420 4249

Hard Rock

Mountain Men (*Shan Ren*), Masturbation (*Ziwei*) and Quasimodo will rock out.

Where: Starting Bar, opposite the west gate of Beijing Space and Aviation University, Haidian **When:** January 18, 9 pm **Admission:** adults 30 yuan, students 20 yuan **Tel:** 8233 2264

Hip-Hop Night

On Saturday, Scream presents a lineup of hard rockin' TBA acts. On Sunday groove to Xinjiang-flavored dance-on-the-table flamenco from Arken.

Where: CD Café, south of Agriculture Exhibition Center, Chaoyang **When:** 9 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6501 8877 ext 3032

More Bands

On January 17, Break Sound, one of most promising local bands in Beijing, will perform Radiohead rock, and tomorrow Convenience Store (*Bianli Shangdian*) takes the stage. On Sunday, catch Thing (*Dongxi*), an international collaborative effort new for this winter.

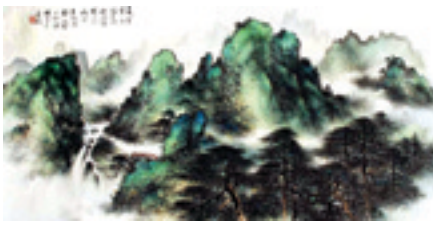
Where: What, opposite north gate of Business and Economics University, Chaoyang **When:** 9 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan **Tel:** 13910 209249

Exhibitions

Print Exhibition

This exhibition features woodcut works from Wang Yi, Gao Rongsheng, Liang Dong, Song Yuanwen and Wang Huaxiang, and copperplate works from Wang Weixing and Lin Tong.

Where: Qin Gallery, Huaweili Enjoy Paradise1-1E (North of Beijing Curio City) Chaoyang **When:** January 22-28, 9:30 am-7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0461



Painting by Zhao Xiongcai

Young and Middle-aged Artists

Fine works by contemporary young and middle-aged Chinese artists. The show will offer a large selection of paintings by Wang Mingming, Liang Yan, Zhao Wuchao, Feng Linzhang, Song Yuhui and Liu Jibiao.

Where: East Hall of Wanfung Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** till January 30 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320

From Russia With Oil

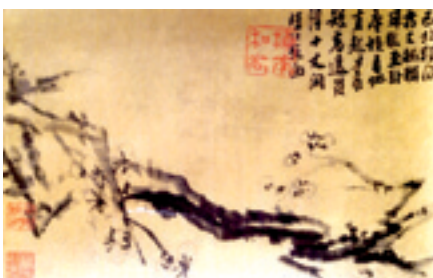
Sun Yuntai, Zhang Zisheng, Zang Erkang all specialize in landscape oils. Art pioneer Sun was among the first group of artists to return from Russia and the West in the early twentieth century and introduce oil painting to China.

Where: Soka Art Centre, behind the British embassy, east of Xiushui Dongjie **When:** January 16-25, (Tuesday-Sunday) 1-7 pm **Tel:** 6586 0344

Desert Storm

Zhang Yongxu, graduate of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and his brashly-colored oils have exhibited in the US and Japan. Here, he presents oils and video work documenting the culture of his homeland.

Where: Cultural Office of the Italian Embassy **When:** January 17-February 2, 9 am-1 pm, 2-5 pm, (Monday-Friday) **Tel:** 6532 2187



Plum Blossom by a painter of Yangzhou School

Sketches Exhibition

A show of the works by Li Keran, Zheng Yuhe, Lu Chen, Li Xiaoke, Yang Gang and Yangzhou Baguai.

Where: Creation Gallery, north end of Ritan Donglu, Chaoyang **When:** till January 24, 10 am-7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570.

Music

Pop Spectacular

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the launch of charts for Chinese songs, this pop spectacular will highlight the latest Chinese hits. Songs will be put on by their original performers, such as Lin Yilun's *Burning Night*, Han Hong's *Singing* and Sun Nan's *The Sky of Fates*.

Where: Capital Gymnasium, Baishiqiao Lu, Haidian **When:** January 17, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 380, 280, 200, 120, 80 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 508

A Decade of Pop

In this concert to hail a decade of Chinese pop music, famous singers will show up to perform their hits as a special treat for music lovers. Songs will include *Xiao Fang*, *Tongzuo de Ni*, *Qinghai Tibet Plateau* and more.

Where: Capital Gymnasium, Baishiqiao Lu, Haidian **When:** January 18, 7:30 pm **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 198

Beethoven's Music

The China Philharmonic Orchestra offers up the works of Beethoven under the baton of Shi Shucheng. Piano Concerto No. 2 in B Flat Major, Symphony No. 2 in D Major.

Where: Century Theatre **When:** January 17, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30, 60, 120, 180, 220, 300 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7673 ext 198

Violin Concert

Led by Jiang Xiongda, the Beijing Youth Chamber Orchestra will perform a series of pieces.

Where: Concert Hall of the China National Library, Zhongguancun Nandajie **When:** January 18, 2:30 pm **Admission:** 20, 30, 40, 50 yuan **Tel:** 8854 5520, 6841 9220

Chinese Folk Songs

A group of senior folk singers will perform a series of old folk songs, including *The Song of the Yangtze River*, *That is Me*, *The Never-Setting Sun in the Grassland*, *The Red Star Lights My Way to Battle* and others.

Where: Concert Hall of the China National Library, Zhongguancun Nandajie **When:** January 28, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 20, 30, 40, 50 yuan **Tel:** 8854 5520, 6841 9220

Activities

Gala Party

Beijing Language and Cultural Centre for Diplomatic Missions (LCC) will hold traditional Spring Festival party in honor of all the foreign students. The gala party is the 15th of its kind hosted by LCC.

Where: Tianqiaole Teahouse **When:** January 18 **Tel:** 6532 3005

A Memorial for Douglass Monitto

Douglass Monitto, former owner of the Big Easy, passed away two years ago, leaving his passion for blues and rock in Beijing. The Big Easy was his baby and his gateway to sharing a love of blues and jazz with the people of China. To give thanks for support and in remembrance, The Big Easy invites all friends of music to listen to some great tunes and keep Doug's tradition alive with featured artists Jacqui 'Sugar Mama' Stanton, Humble Mike and the Rhythm Dogs.

Where: Big Easy, east of south gate, Chaoyang Park, Chaoyang **When:** January 20 **Tel:** 6508 6776 **Email:** thebigeasybj@yahoo.com

There is One in Every Family

In a film that promises fun for the whole family, Dragon Club will show the popular animated movie *Lilo & Stitch*, dubbed into Chinese. The same night, enjoy Wynonna and A*Teens singing *Burning Love* and *Cannot Help Falling In Love*.

Channel: BTB 8 **When:** January 18, (every Saturday), 7-7:30 pm **Tel:** 8527 6466



Lilo is an alien dog

Performance

Classic Ballet: One Thousand and One Nights

Former star of the Kirov Ballet Eldar Aliev and former woman star of the Kirov Ballet Irina Kolpakova are leading the US international Ballet Dancing Group to perform ballet classics during the Spring Festival season.

This group is made up of artists from the Kirov Ballet, Ballet de L'Opera national de Vienna, Ballet de L'Opera national de Zurich, Joffrey Ballet, New York City Ballet, Ukrainian National L'Opera and Ballet Theatre and the Houston Ballet.

Where: Ethnic Cultural Palace Theatre **When:** January 20-25, 7: 30 pm **Admission:** 120, 280, 380, 500, 680, 800 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7750 ext 508



Madame Butterfly is missing her husband

Madame Butterfly

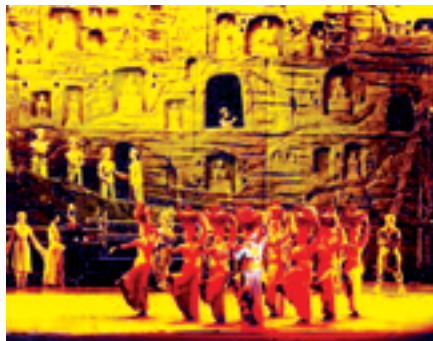
The China Opera and Dance Theater was established in 1950. For over fifty years, the Theater has produced some one hundred well-known operas and has paid performing visits to several countries in Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Where: Tianqiao Theatre, 30 Beiwai Lu, Xuanwu **When:** January 17-21, 7: 30 pm **Admission:** 80, 180, 280, 380, 480, 680 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7673 ext 198

Don Quixote

A Russian version of the ballet by the Russian National Ballet, with music by performers from the Russian National Philharmonic.

Where: Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimen Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** January 17-19, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 100, 200, 300, 500, 800, 1000, 1200 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7673 ext 508



The story happens in Dunhuang

Dunhuang My Dreamland

This ballet, created by the Lanzhou Song and Dance Theater Troupe, tells the mythical story of a young painter, Mokao, who went to Dunhuang in pursuit of the highest realm of lofty thought in art. He met a girl, Yueya, and fell in love. Later, because she was surrounded by hostile army of the Great General, Yueya turned herself into a spring. Mokao dipped his pen in water from the spring and wrote a beautiful, sorrowful song. Their story has been immortalized in actual places, the Mokao Grotto and the Yueya Spring.

Where: The Great Hall of the People **When:** January 18, 7: 30 pm **Admission:** 80, 180, 280, 380, 580, 800 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 198

India's Bollywood

The Bollywood Film, Song and Dance Troupe will showcase colorful classics from their country. Some of India's brightest talents will come, along with clips from major films. The show will include singing and dancing performances set in royal courts, from weddings and festive celebrations and from Indian folklore.

Where: Worker's Gymnasium **When:** January 17-18, 7: 30 pm **Admission:** 120, 180, 280, 480, 680 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 198

Raise the Red Lantern

This ballet, based on the film of the same name directed by Zhang Yimou, tells the story of the misery of one woman in a traditional Chinese feudal household. The film won the Silver Lion Award in the 48th International Venice Film Festival and was a nominee for Best Foreign Film in the 64th Oscar Awards. Performed by the Central Ballet of China.

Where: Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie Dongcheng **When:** January 23-25, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120, 180, 280, 480, 680 yuan **Tel:** 6506 8888

High Altitude Adventures in Zhongdian

By Huang Lisha/Zhang Qingning

Looking at a map, it is easy to see why Yunnan is sometimes described as a miniature of China. The setting of Zhongdian in Yunnan is comparable to that of Xinjiang in China. Xinjiang is famous for its Silk Road, while Zhongdian is a strategic pass on the "Tea and Horse Road" in south China.

At 3,400 meters above sea level, Zhongdian is of a similar altitude to Lhasa, capital of Tibet, however travelers to the county rarely suffer from altitude sickness. Scientists have suggested that the vast area of forest coverage around Zhongdian provides such an abundance of oxygen that the effects of the thin air are somewhat negated.

Sumtseling Monastery

Built in the 17th century, Sumtseling Monastery (松赞林寺), also known as Guihua Temple, sits at the foot of Foping Mountain (佛屏山), five kilometers from Zhongdian (中甸). Modeled on Lhasa's Potala Palace, it is the biggest Tibetan Buddhism temple in Yunnan, and also the center for Gelug-pa (one of the four main branches of Tibetan Buddhism) in the Sichuan and Yunnan area. Sumtseling embodies the essence of Tibetan architecture, and is often described as a "Tibetan Art Museum".

The temple is a typical Tibetan style construction, surrounded by a wall with five gates, named Zhaya, Duke, Dongwang, Longba, and Lugu. The two main halls, Zhacang and Jiliang, stand in the center, surrounded by eight smaller halls and a number of temples.

With the capacity to seat 1,600, the Zhacang, which means monastery in Tibetan, is where the monks, or lamas, study and chant Buddhist scriptures. The structure is supported by 108 columns, 108 being an auspicious number. At the southern end of the hall is a drum tower, where the time of day is struck out. It is said that the drum's sound can be heard up to 10 kilometers away.

The monks at Sumtseling are divided into three grades, Zhacang, Kangcan, and Mican. Zhacang is the highest level, usually under the guidance of a senior Lama. Mican is the lowest level. Besides Zhacang and Mican, there are eight Kangcan in the temple. Kangcan, which means "Lama group," are under the authority of the Zhacang. The monks are also divided into different groups according to birthplace. These groups are the leading organizations in their respective parishes, in charge of local economic and religion affairs.

Bitahai Lake

Bitahai (纳塔海) is a lake three kilometers long and 700 meters wide, located in the northwest of Zhongdian County. The Tibetan name for Bitahai means "a sea as soft as a felt."

There are many rare fish species in the unpolluted waters of Bitahai, the most famous of which is the Bitu multi-lipped fish. The three-lipped fish is a relic of the stone age, having been around for some 2 million years. Rowing a boat on the lake on a sunny day, it is easy to spot the fish in the water below, even the patterns on their backs can be seen clearly.

If you visit Bitahai Lake in June or July, you will have a chance to see the spectacle of "Dujuan Zui Yu (fish drunk on azalea)." Azalea leaves contain a light narcotic, and when the fish eat those that fall into the lake at this time of year, they become "drunk," and float senseless on the lake's surface, until the effects wear off.

To get to Bitahai Lake, you can rent a car or take a bus (20 yuan) from Zhongdian, but the road only covers the first 25 kilometers of the trip, which means you have to walk or rent a horse (another 20 yuan) for the remaining seven kilometers.

Napahai Lake

Napahai (纳帕海), or "the lake behind the forest," in Tibetan, is in the northwest of Zhongdian County. The three sides of the lake are surrounded by 4,000-meter high peaks.

What makes Napahai unusual is the nine "holes" in the floor of the lake, through which the lake's water gradually drains away during summer and autumn, flowing into the Jinsha River.

In summer and autumn the lake really is a lake, while in winter and spring it becomes a large swamp that is home to many rare migratory birds, including the endangered black-necked cranes. There are only some 1,000 black-necked cranes still living in the wild, 150 of which winter at Napahai.

The best time to visit the lake is May when the wildflowers are in full bloom. It is easy to get to from Zhongdian. There are regular buses, costing 3 to 5 yuan.

Shudu Lake

Situated in the northeast of Zhongdian, the



Bitahai Lake

Photo by Liu Guoming



Shudu Lake



Baishuitai



Napahai Lake

Photo by Liu Guoming



Shudu Lake



Dancing monk at Sumtseling Monastery

Photo by Gordon Sharpless



A Lama orchestra at Sumtseling Monastery

Photo by Gordon Sharpless

15-square-kilometer Shudu Lake (属都湖) is the largest in the county. With an ancient forest on one side, the east bank of the lake is lined with white birch trees that form a golden sea in autumn.

Shudu lies in a large area of pasture. Every spring, presents an idyllic picture, with cattle huts scattered about, and herds of cattle and flocks of sheep grazing here and there on the grassland.

Shudu Lake is also easy to get to. Day trips can be made from Zhongdian, and it is only 10 kilometers from Shudu to Bita Lake. There is a path through the forest connecting the two.

Baishuitai

Baishuitai (白水台), or White Water Terrace, lies some 100 kilometers from Zhongdian, in the village of Badi (白地村), 2,380-meters-high above sea level. In Naxi language, Baishuitai is known as Shibuzhi, meaning "growing flower." According to local legend, the "terrace" is a fairy

maiden's dressing table. Covering an area of three square kilometers and resembling a white marble staircase, Baishuitai is a formation caused by the deposit of mineral sediment. From the top, there is a superb view of the surrounding countryside.

In fact, Baishuitai is not just a resort with magnificent scenery, it is the birthplace of Dongbajiao (the religion of the Naxi ethnic

minority) and the Dongba script.

According to local legend, Baishuitai is "the terrace left behind by gods". It is said that in order to teach Naxi people how to cultivate, two gods, Meilidong and Meilise, created Baishuitai, on which they demonstrated ploughing and weeding.

Another legend says Ding Ba Hui Luo, the founder of the Dongba religion, was deeply affected by the beauty of Baishuitai. So after returning from Tibet, where he had studied Buddhist scriptures, he settled down there and taught religion.

Every February, thousands of Naxi people gather at Baishitai to celebrate their traditional festival "Zhaobaishui" and ask the gods to bestow a good harvest in the coming year.

Every day many buses depart Zhongdian Bus Station for Baishuitai, more on Sundays and holidays. There are also four guesthouses in Baidi, for those who decide to linger.

Getting there: It is a three-hour flight to Kunming from Beijing, followed by a 20-hour bus trip (134 yuan) from Kunming to Zhongdian (buses depart Nanjiawan bus station, 南家湾汽车站, and Nanyao Bus Station, 南窑汽车站, from every day). There are through buses to every resort from Zhongdian. There are also daily flights from Kunming to Zhongdian, taking one hour.

Important reminders: Despite the "abundance of oxygen," most of Zhongdian sits at an elevation at which altitude sickness can be an issue. During the first day or so after arrival, avoid strenuous exercise. People suffering from heart disease or hypertension are discouraged from making the journey. Taking Hong Jing Tian (红景天) and Ji Gan (肌苷), Tibetan herbal medicine, two days ahead of the trip can help alleviate symptoms of altitude sickness.

Great Wall Buffs

Gubeikou: Guarding Beijing

By Jerry Ho/Chen Jie

Lying between the North China Plain and the Yan-shan Mountains, Miyun County is an important link between Beijing and the grasslands of Inner Mongolia. The town of Gubeikou (古北口镇), or North Gate, in the far north of Miyun County, has long been a place of key strategic importance. The section of Great Wall that runs along one side of the town is known as the Gubeikou Great Wall.

This section of Great Wall was first constructed almost 1,400 years ago, along with a fortified pass and stockade. It became important in the communication and defense of Beijing during the Ming dynasty.

As the first and closest frontier pass to Beijing, large garrisons of troops were stationed at Gubeikou through the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, and many decisive battles were fought in its vicinity.

The Gubeikou Great Wall is almost 16 kilometers long, with 172 watchtowers and beacon towers. It is divided into five sections, of which the Jinshanling (金山岭) and Simatai (司马台) section are already open to tourists.

The Gubeikou Great Wall features a distinctive frontier pass, called Shuimenguan (水门关) or Water Gate Pass. The main body of the Wall was built over the Chao River, linking the two hills of Panlong (Hidden Dragon) and Wohu (Crouching Tiger). The river flows under the wall through three sluice gates. On the east bank of the river is a narrow pass called Tiemenguan (铁门关), or Iron Gate Pass. Two towers on the ridge of the hill to the west of Tiemenguan and are known as the Sister Towers.

Local products

After Emperor Kangxi built a summer palace in Chengde, Hebei Province, subsequent Qing emperors and their retinues would pass through Gubeikou on their way to the summer retreat. The small town gradually became a prosperous trading center for merchants from nearby regions. Silk cloths, teas and porcelains from the south and grain, livestock and medicines from the north were traded here.

Nearby scenic spots

There were once over ten temples in Gubeikou, most of which no longer exist.

Ling Gong Temple (令公庙)

This is the only temple still standing in China dedicated to general Yang Jiye (also called Yang Wudi, the Invincible Yang). Yang was a Song Dynasty general who fought against the invading Liao. The temple is built on a raised area outside the north gate of the town. There are two halls. The front hall, Ling Gong Hall, contains statues of General Yang and his eight sons, while the rear hall, Tai Jun Hall (太君殿) contains statues of the general's mother and female soldiers of the family.

Yao Wang (King of Medicine) Temple (药王庙)

Yao Wang Temple is actually a complex consisting of three individual temples, all built during the early Ming Dynasty.



A Ming era stage in Gubeikou

Photo by Wang Jian